

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS BULLETIN

No. 3627: July 15, 1936

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MUNICIPAL PUBLIC REPORTING IN TEXAS

By

J. T. BARTON

Research Assistant in the Bureau of Municipal Research

Bureau of Research in the Social Sciences

Study No. 22

Municipal Studies, No. 9



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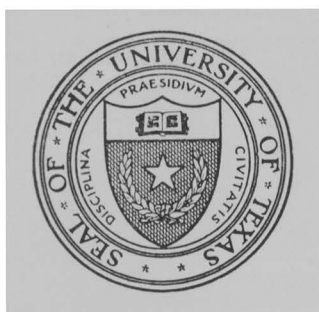
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The benefits of education and of useful knowledge, generally diffused through a community, are essential to the preservation of a free government.

Sam Houston

Cultivated mind is the guardian genius of Democracy, and while guided and controlled by virtue, the noblest attribute of man. It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge, and the only security which freemen desire.

Mirabeau B. Lamar

Municipal Studies of The University of Texas

Number 9

BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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PREFACE

Those who have had occasion to delve into the affairs of cities and to learn something of their operation have been impressed with the fact that few municipalities have given much attention to the compilation and presentation of facts concerning the conduct of their governments. With the increasing demands of urban citizens for accurate and dependable information on municipal affairs, it is evident that cities will have to accord more attention to the proper methods of conducting a program of public reporting. In presenting this study of municipal reporting practices in Texas, it is the purpose of the Bureau of Municipal Research to answer some of the questions which arise in the administration of a reporting program and to submit certain concrete proposals which can be fitted into the regular municipal routine.

The information relating to actual municipal reporting practices in Texas rests on a representative sample of fifty-eight cities (approximately 10 per cent of the state's total), of which fifty supplied the data desired. Personal visits were made to some thirty of the cities by members of the staff. Although not complete, it is believed that the information obtained is representative of reporting practices in Texas cities.

The study is heavily indebted to a number of persons. Chief among these are the city officials who answered the questionnaires and queries of members of the staff. Professor Roscoe C. Martin, Director of the Bureau of Municipal Research of The University of Texas, gave careful attention to the study throughout the process of preparation and made many helpful suggestions based on former writings in the field. Mr. Norris A. Hiett, former Research Assistant in the Bureau of Municipal Research, rendered valuable aid by conducting the field work and preparing the original manuscript. Mr. E. E. McAdams, Executive Secretary of the League of Texas Municipalities, Mr. James

W. Aston, Assistant Director of Finance of the City of Dallas, Mr. J. M. Barker, Auditor of the City of Amarillo, and Mr. F. L. Bertschler, Park Superintendent of the City of Beaumont, each read and criticized the manuscript with beneficial results. The Bureau of Research in the Social Sciences of The University of Texas furnished the necessary financial support for the conduct and publication of the study.

R. WELDON COOPER,

Acting Director of the Bureau of Municipal Research.

Austin, Texas.

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CHAPTER I

THE CASE FOR PUBLIC REPORTING

The city's government plays too important a rôle in the lives of urban citizens to go unnoticed, but whether the opinions which they hold in regard to it are founded on hearsay or on fact depends largely upon the accuracy, scope, and attractiveness of the information available. The interests of both the city's government and its citizens are best served by the perpetuation of a rational public opinion which has its basis in fact. Often, however, there are few public organizations about which people are so uninformed, or misinformed, as their own municipal government. In order to point the way to a more enlightened public opinion, this discussion sets forth the methods by which a city, through the use of public reporting, can inform its citizens and sustain their interest.

If a city is to function properly, it must make use of both internal and external reporting. Internal reporting has to do with the transfer of information from one person or unit, within the city government, to another. This transfer is necessary for executive, administrative, and legislative purposes and is so important that complex sets of records are kept expressly for the purpose of furnishing data for the reports. The present discussion does not deal with internal reporting, however, but carries the reporting concept one step farther and treats of the most important variety of external reporting, public reporting.¹ Municipal

¹Other types of external municipal reporting have to do with the furnishing of information (1) to other levels of government and (2) to financial institutions. As an example of the first, Texas cities annually must file their budgets and debt statements with the State Comptroller and certain data concerning tax collection and funded debt with the State Auditor (see the *General Laws of Texas, Regular Session of the Forty-second Legislature, 1931*, Ch. 206, Sec. 14; Ch. 230, Sec. 1; Ch. 279, Secs. 1-6). Also, cities must make reports to the federal government when seeking P.W.A. funds. As an example of

public reporting is here defined broadly to include not only the procedures for furnishing information to the people but also those for creating and sustaining a public interest in municipal affairs.²

The methods by which a city may keep its people in touch with their government fall into two broad divisions: (1) current reporting and (2) formal reporting. Current reporting is a day-to-day process which aims primarily to create and sustain a public interest in municipal government, and is worthy of the same thorough treatment given other governmental services which are regularly rendered. One group of current reporting activities appeals primarily to the eye: newspapers, pamphlets, signs, posters, motion pictures, and exhibits are examples. Another group depends upon establishing a direct contact between city officials and citizens. These contacts may be made not only individually but also with groups at schools and clubs, and through public budget hearings and the radio. Formal reporting, on the other hand, is more specialized and aims to furnish reasonably complete information to individuals and agencies that are interested in the city government as a whole, or in any of its branches. Included among formal reports are departmental and functional reports as well as

the second type of external reporting, many financial institutions, particularly the local banks and the bond firms which deal in municipal securities, ask for reports from cities. The succeeding discussion touches incidentally upon each of these, though its emphasis is upon public reporting.

²Although "books, accounts, papers and documents which are public records are at all times open to inspection of citizens and taxpayers," access to public records, while important, does not in itself guarantee an adequate dissemination of information concerning local government. For the right of "citizens and taxpayers" to make such inspections, see Eugene McQuillin, *The Law of Municipal Corporations*, Second Edition (Callaghan and Co., New York, 1928), Vol. II, Sec. 660. Other references may be found in John F. Dillon, *Commentaries on the Law of Municipal Corporations*, Fifth Edition (Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1911), Vol. II, Secs. 559-560, and Vol. IV, Sec. 1505.

the annual consolidated report. Departmental or functional reports deal with such specific activities or problems as fire and police protection, health service, and finance, and generally are published at given intervals, usually monthly, quarterly, semiannually, or annually. The annual consolidated report is a single volume containing a summary account of all municipal activities.

Our democratic government is based on the premise that citizens are capable of self-government. The growth of cities, the multiplication of municipal services, and the increasing complexity of urban life have conspired to make municipal government grow more and more complicated, with the consequence that some have raised the question whether the people still are capable of managing their own affairs. These skeptics fail to realize that, as the complexities of government have increased, new devices have appeared to make more easy the task of self-government. Examples are the short ballot, the city manager plan, and proportional representation. Public reporting, which is another such device, bids fair to become the very keystone of democratic government, for the political prudence of the electorate depends largely on the reliability of the information on which its judgment is founded. The public is not so short in either intelligence or interest as in facts;³ public reporting gains its place in the democratic process by sustaining interest and furnishing facts.

Urban citizens have the right to be informed of the affairs of their city government for several reasons: first, they elect the city officials; second, they use the services which are rendered by the city; third, they pay the taxes by which the city government is financed; and fourth, they authorize the bonded debt of the city and, through taxes, repay the debt. As consumers of municipal services, citizens demand more and more conveniences at the hands of

³Clarence E. Ridley, "Municipal Reporting," *Proceedings, Sixth Annual Meeting of the American Municipal Association, 1930* (American Municipal Association, Lawrence, Kansas), p. 92.

the government, which require the expenditure of additional tax money; as payers of taxes, on the other hand, they desire a reduction of the tax bill, which lowers the governmental income and so limits the number and quality of services performed by the city. Democracy lets the citizen deal with this dilemma by furnishing the machinery for self-government. Public reporting makes it possible for him to operate that machinery intelligently.

Some observers assume a defeatist attitude in regard to informing citizens concerning governmental affairs. For example, one author has said that about all that can be expected with respect to the drama of government and politics is that "The public will arrive in the middle of the third act and will leave before the last curtain, having stayed just long enough perhaps to decide who is the hero and who the villain of the piece."⁴ In this case it is appropriate to ask if the drama in question is advertised and the cast announced in advance, if a program is given the spectator when he arrives, and if he is extended courteous treatment while there. Whether or not the citizen evinces a consuming interest in the drama of public affairs, the fact remains that he must buy a season ticket, that he in fact *owns* the show. In a democracy the citizen is more than a spectator; he is actually part of the drama. The attitude implicit in the above quotation strikes at the very heart of democracy, for defeatism in civic education is responsible for much of our low-level civic behavior.⁵ The right of the people to govern has long been accepted in this country; we now need to guarantee the corollary right of the people to be informed concerning the matters which are involved in their governing.

Not only does public reporting facilitate the democratic process by making possible a "public audit" and thus giving

⁴Walter Lippman, *The Phantom Public* (Harcourt, Brace, and Co., New York, 1925), p. 65.

⁵Charles E. Merriam, *Civic Education in the United States* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1934), p. xv.

public opinion a basis in fact, but it also serves the subsidiary purpose of furthering civic education by encouraging a general diffusion of knowledge of the government and by increasing citizen participation. Further, public reporting serves a number of secondary, though very important, purposes. First, it increases the prestige value of public office and thus improves the morale of governmental employees. Second, it tends to produce higher standards of performance by encouraging self-examination by members of the governmental organization. Third, publicity greatly increases the good resulting from the work of certain branches of the government, particularly those which perform inspectional duties, for only through publicity can the public as a whole make use of the facts discovered. Fourth, public reports perform an essential service in counteracting biased or incomplete reports of persons or agencies opposed to good government. Fifth, these reports encourage the interchange of ideas among officials, units of government, and levels of government. Sixth, an adequate system of public reports encourages research, which in turn both promotes the cause of scientific government and fosters broader knowledge of public affairs. In sum, public reporting has a number of purposes, most of which relate directly or indirectly to civic education.⁶

Despite the importance of public reporting, Texas cities have done very little in this field.⁷ In fact, an examination of the charters of some thirty Texas cities disclosed provisions for only such public reporting as is required by

⁶These purposes of public reporting were taken from Roscoe C. Martin, "Public Reporting," *The Government of Texas, A Survey*, edited by S. D. Myres, Jr. (papers presented at the first Arnold Foundation Conference on Public Affairs, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Mar. 2-3, 1934), pp. 104-105.

⁷A recent survey shows that public reporting is neglected in the entire field of local government. See Roscoe C. Martin, *Urban Local Government in Texas* (Austin, 1936), pp. 145-149.

The cities of other states do little if any more public reporting than Texas cities. See *Reporting Governmental Costs* (a pamphlet published by the National Municipal League, New York, 1935), p. 3.

law. State statutes provide for the city to make a contract with a local newspaper to serve as the official organ for publishing all ordinances, notices, and other matters required by statute or ordinance to be published;⁸ for the newspaper publication for ten days after its passage of each ordinance imposing a penalty, fine, or forfeiture;⁹ and for the publication in a newspaper of semiannual and annual financial statements.¹⁰ Compliance with these statutory provisions constitutes the extent of the public reporting activities of most of the cities in this state. In brief, the majority of Texas cities do no more reporting than is required by law, and a few do even less.

The reasons why Texas cities have done little public reporting in the past are readily discovered. They have been small: San Antonio with 53,321 people was the only city which had more than 50,000 population in 1900. Until recently they have been sufficiently prosperous that relatively few questions have arisen concerning the spending of tax money. Consequently, when the impact of the depression was felt in the early 1930's, urban citizens in the state had little knowledge of city government to guide them. The tax burden, because of reduced individual incomes, became more painful than before. Citizens often were blindly critical of their city governments, and talk of tax strikes was common. The city governments, in turn, were confronted not only with annual reductions in assessed valuations, tax levies, and tax collections,¹¹ but also with the necessity of dealing with an uninformed and unreasoning citizenry. The depression proved conclusively that the absence of public reporting in Texas has led to many gross misunderstandings between cities and their inhabitants.

⁸*Revised Civil Statutes of Texas, 1925* (Austin, 1925), Art. 1025.

⁹If publication is weekly, the information shall be printed in one issue. *Ibid.*, Art. 1013.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, Arts. 1001 and 1023.

¹¹See J. T. Barton, *City Indebtedness in Texas* (Austin, 1936), p. 21.

Never before has the need for public reporting been more painfully apparent than now, for only through the avenue which it provides can citizens be impressed with the fact that, in paying taxes, they are *buying* necessary services, not merely *paying* for something intangible. Fully as important as the amount of tax payments are the number and quality of services financed by the payments.

Upon what agency may citizens rely for dependable information concerning their city government? And what organization is to sustain interest in municipal problems? In some of the largest cities of the country these services are performed, in part, by bureaus of municipal research;¹² and in some states they are performed, though too often inadequately, by state departments which collect and publish financial data from the units of local government.¹³ Also, state leagues of municipalities in many cases perform public reporting services. Citizens in Texas cities at present are denied the first two of these sources of information. No city of the state has a bureau of municipal research; and while it is true that the State Comptroller's and State Auditor's offices collect annual data concerning the outstanding indebtedness and fiscal condition of municipalities, this information is published only in barest summary. The League of Texas Municipalities, however, has rendered an important service by publishing various analyses.¹⁴ But even though all three of these sources should be available, the citizen still should feel that he can depend directly upon his city's government for information about itself; for bureaus of research, state departments, and leagues of municipalities are supplementary rather

¹²Bureaus of municipal research in New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit, Buffalo, and other large cities have done excellent work in publicizing the activities of municipal government.

¹³An excellent example of state reporting of municipal financial information is found in New York in the *Special Report on Municipal Accounts, 1934* (Office of the State Comptroller, State of New York, Albany, 1935), 347 pp.

¹⁴See, for example, "Comparison of Tax Rates of Texas Cities for 1935," *Texas Municipalities*, Apr., 1936, pp. 97-110.

than primary sources of information, and the last two cannot, as a rule, analyze any specific local situation in the detail that is desirable from the viewpoint of local taxpayers.

If the responsibility for public reporting is to rest on the city itself, some provision should be made for an agency or unit within the municipal organization to perform this function. The haphazard method by which the officials in various departments make infrequent reports without reference to any preconceived plan is highly unsatisfactory. In the first place, under this muddled practice public reporting depends upon the whims of those who happen to be in authority in the various branches of the city organization, and is not recognized as a definite function to be performed regularly. In the second, the heads of the various departments seldom have a flair for preparing information in an attractive way, and thus cannot present their knowledge of city government in an arresting style. Finally, no administrative job in any governmental organization is likely to be performed properly unless both the authority and the responsibility for its exercise are placed upon some one person. Obviously, then, some one official in each municipality should be definitely charged with all reporting activities. He should direct all current reporting, prescribe the form of and edit the departmental and functional reports, and prepare the annual consolidated report.¹⁵ In the larger cities the person designated as public reporter should be attached to the office of the mayor or manager. Smaller cities may choose one of the regular officials—for example, the mayor, manager, or secretary—to be the reporting officer. The person who has charge of the reporting function should recognize the importance of his duties, should make a study of good reporting practices, and should keep a record of all reporting done.

The accuracy of the information in the reports should be the foremost consideration in their preparation. Under

¹⁵Roscoe C. Martin, "Public Reporting," p. 110.

no circumstances should political propaganda be allowed to creep into this information. One of the chief advantages of an integrated reporting agency is that the public, the city council, and the municipal organization have one definite person whom they may hold responsible for the accuracy of reports.

Also, the reports should be attractive, for we are accustomed to having our interests catered to cleverly. Private corporations, with the objective of advertising products and services, long since have recognized the value of maintaining departments of public relations and of employing trained publicity men. These enterprises aim to increase their profits by impressing the public with the virtues of their products. The cities may well adopt some of the public relations practices which are daily being used by private business; for if the city desires that the public become acquainted with the nature, cost, and value of municipal services, its reports must be attractive and interesting as well as accurate. In all cases municipal public reporting should be regarded as a natural and necessary function, one to be performed in a business-like, matter-of-fact fashion.

The four following chapters aim to explain the methods by which public interest in municipal affairs may be sustained and by which information concerning the city government may be collected, prepared, and distributed. A number of illustrations serve as examples of methods which are actually in use in various cities. In addition, the text indicates the practices which are followed in a sample group of Texas cities. The following chapter discusses visual methods of current reporting, and special attention is directed to the press, pamphlets, signs, posters, motion pictures, exhibits, and demonstrations. Chapter III continues the discussion of current reporting but places major emphasis on direct contact through the schools, civic and

business clubs, public budget hearings, citizen committees, individual relationships, and the radio. Chapter IV deals with formal reports. The concluding chapter presents in summary form the requisites for a program of municipal public reporting.

CHAPTER II

CURRENT REPORTING

Although often dormant, the interest of urban people in their government is sometimes raised to fever-heat during political campaigns; trivial incidents are then likely to loom alarmingly important while significant factors escape wholly unnoticed. Unquestionably, many advantages would accrue not only to the citizens but also to the government if the public interest in municipal affairs could be made both rational and reasonably stable. In the pursuit of this end, a program of current reporting should aim to arouse and sustain an enlightened public interest. This interest may be created by presenting facts in an attractive form, and sustained by making the system of current reporting what it should be, namely, a continuous thing. The problems of current reporting lie not in a dearth of data but in choosing the information to be presented, arranging it in an interesting form, and selecting and using the media for transmitting it to the public.

One group of media appeal primarily to the sense of sight. Visual reports may be made through newspapers, pamphlets, signs and posters, motion pictures, and exhibits and demonstrations. This chapter discusses the types of public reports which employ the media named.

THE PRESS

A vast audience in Texas may be reached through the 125 daily newspapers that are published in 94 cities of the state and which had a paid circulation of 1,389,137 at the beginning of 1936,¹ and many other readers may be reached through the 613 papers which are pub-

¹*Editor and Publisher* (International Yearbook Number for 1936), Jan. 25, 1936, p. 124.

lished less frequently.² In fact, the press is so influential that 67 per cent of the city managers who participated in a recent nation-wide survey hold the opinion that newspapers offer the best medium for municipal reporting.³ The importance of the press is unquestioned, but undirected influence is injurious as often as it is helpful. The major problem of reporting city affairs through the press, then, becomes one of actively coöperating with the reporters by furnishing them information which, when printed, will give an accurate and if possible a balanced picture of the city government.

A question may arise in the minds of some regarding the news value of municipal activities. The city government is more than a legal corporation: it is an organization of men who wage a ceaseless fight against crime, disease, fire, and traffic accidents. It is an institution which seeks both to raise the level of living and to equalize opportunities through the furnishing of parks, playgrounds, hospitals, schools, and streets. Moreover, most citizens know, personally or by reputation, at least a few of the officials or other employees of the city. Urban citizens, then, as a result of their use of municipal services, their acquaintance with city officials, and their curiosity concerning local happenings, potentially must be concerned with the activities of their city government.

The difficulty of getting interesting and accurate municipal news into the newspapers is twofold: (1) while reporters know news values, they often are not familiar with city government, and (2) while city officials know the city government, they frequently are not acquainted with news

²Of these 613 newspapers, 20 are published semiweekly, 590 weekly, 1 semimonthly, and 2 monthly. See *N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals, 1936* (N. W. Ayer & Son, Inc., Philadelphia, 1936), p. 12.

³This percentage was computed from data found in "How City Managers Maintain Contact With the Public," *Public Management*, Oct., 1934, p. 308.

values.⁴ As a result, only sensational or unusual items find their way into print, and these give an inaccurate concept of the governmental machine. There is not so much a misunderstanding as there is a lack of understanding between the press and the city hall.

The importance of an understanding between cities and newspapers is indicated by the fact that city managers as a whole agree that the successful performance of administrative duties requires the coöperation of the press.⁵ The responsibility for achieving a satisfactory working arrangement lies, for the most part, on the city officials, for newspapers usually are anxious to print local news.⁶ The city, to utilize the press to the best advantage, must take the initiative, through its reporting agency, in gathering news items and in coöperating with the reporters. Newspapers are extended little or no assistance by most Texas cities, however, the general attitude being that it is the business of the reporter to find out what he can by his own efforts. Of the cities which furnished information on the point, 63 per cent take no initiative whatever in preparing and furnishing news concerning municipal activities.

In their dealings with the press the city officials must be forthright and open. An attempt to hide a blunder is likely to result not only in a loss of the confidence of the newspaper men but also in hearsay publicity more harmful than the whole truth. The confidence of reporters should be cultivated by giving ample notice of news breaks in advance, thus preventing premature publicity. If the city has more than one paper, all should be treated impartially; news scoops should never be given to one and withheld

⁴The National Committee on Municipal Reporting, *Public Reporting* (Municipal Administration Service, New York, 1931), p. 12.

⁵*Public Management*, Oct., 1934, p. 301.

⁶In a recent text for journalism students the facts are stressed that newspapers must report public affairs and that reporters must acquaint themselves with governmental offices. See Philip W. Porter and Norval Neil Luxon, *The Reporter and the News* (Appleton-Century Co., New York, 1935), pp. 222-223.

from the others. The preparation of written news releases makes for accuracy, and important happenings should be thus handled. News most commonly is released through interviews, however; so important is this method that it is customary for city managers to give regular interviews to reporters.⁷ In a number of the smaller cities the managers are in close personal contact with all municipal activities, and the department heads usually are not allowed to give interviews; but in the larger cities department heads generally exercise this right. In all instances, however, the managers retain general control over news releases and interviews. In manager cities the city manager is in charge of the public reporting function, which creates the integrated reporting agency recommended in Chapter I.⁸ In all releases to the press, due credit should be given to the various employees and subordinate officials for their accomplishments. Such recognition both gives the public an accurate story and improves the morale of the governmental service. Administrative officials should never give information concerning the prospective action of the council on a controversial point. If such information is to be made public, it should come directly from the council.

Particular attention may be called to three types of news releases. First, unusual happenings and striking bits of information constitute the source for most stories. Since the element of timeliness is of paramount importance in these stories, many interesting municipal happenings do not receive publicity, for many city officials fail to recognize the importance of timeliness. Second, periodic reports may be made with good effect. The city secretary of Bal-linger, for example, every two weeks prepares for publication a brief account of services rendered and money received, and these reports are published regularly in the local paper. Third, special feature articles may be employed to analyze and discuss public functions, their purposes and problems. Feature articles deal with the more important

⁷*Public Management*, Oct., 1934, p. 300

⁸See p. 16.

aspects of public administration and may be written either by a reporter or by a city official. These three types of reporting should operate jointly, for each has a definite rôle to play in a rounded reporting program. A mere perfunctory mention in the newspapers of an unusually important item is insufficient. The discussion of such a topic should, if necessary, extend over a period of weeks, or even months.⁹

While not a news release of the city, the letters which are written to the contributor's or the "Voice of the People" column often concern the city government. Moreover, some of these letters injure the city by making questionable statements or by quoting inaccurate statistics. One city eliminated this source of misinformation by making an agreement with the editor that before the publication of such letters the facts would be obtained from the city hall, and if need be, a statement appended after the letters setting forth the true state of affairs.¹⁰

The general run of news from units of local government may well be placed in the same part of the paper from day to day. In large cities the volume of this news may warrant the setting aside of all or a considerable part of a page, while a single column may suffice in small cities. In either case, the newspaper readers know where to find municipal news, just as they know where to find the sport or stock market news. *The Dallas Morning News* and the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* print this news on the first page of the second section, and the *San Antonio Express* prints it on the last page. Particularly important news stories break through to the front page headlines from time to time, but the general run of municipal news should be in the customary page or column.

Short articles may often be made attractive by using special methods of printing. For example, the stories may

⁹See Daniel W. Hoan, *City Government* (Harcourt, Brace, and Co., New York, 1936), p. 103.

¹⁰Henry Traxler, "How to Create Public Good Will," *Public Management*, Jan., 1934, p. 14.

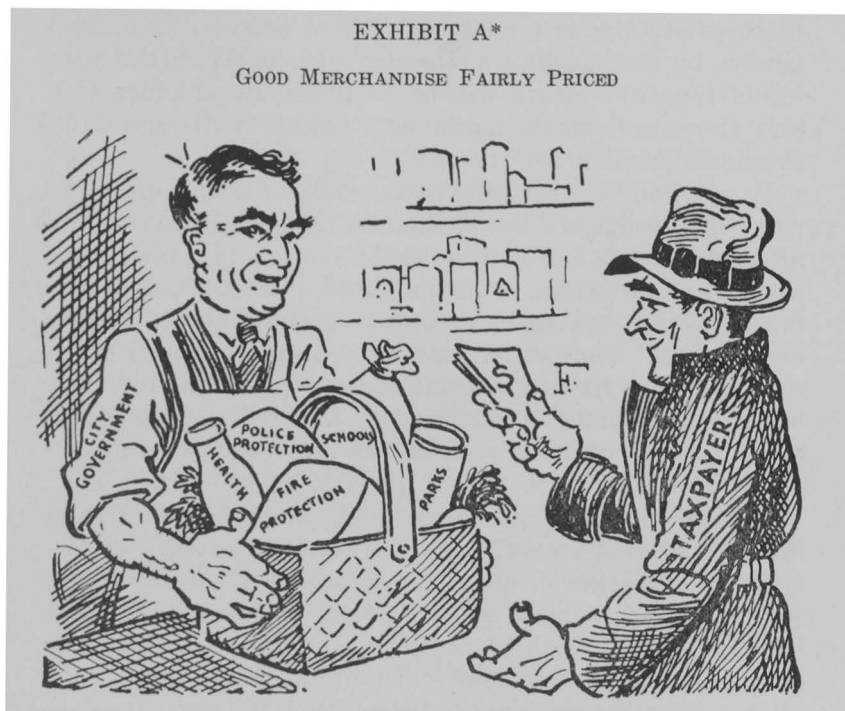
be boxed or headed with heavy type. *The Waco Times-Herald's* "Official Records" contains the divisions "In the Courts" and "Police Blotter," each set off in heavy type.¹¹ Similarly, *The Fort Worth Press* in its "Brief News 'Roundabout Fort Worth" uses heavy type to emphasize the subheadings "What's Doing Tomorrow" (a list of the times and places of important meetings or happenings), "Traffic Arrests," "Accidents," "Thefts and Burglaries," and "Fire Alarms."¹² Other items also may often be presented to advantage by use of special printing methods.

Many opportunities for capturing the public interest are offered by the use of illustrative materials. The city may furnish newspapers with attractive photographs of parks, buildings, and scenes before and after the construction of public improvements. If it is desired to emphasize the need for improvements, the photographs may be of dangerously narrow streets, antiquated one-way bridges, or crowded schoolrooms. Perhaps no form of printed matter catches the public eye more readily than a clever cartoon. If the city maintains friendly relations with newspapers, a newspaper cartoonist may occasionally assist in the city's program of public reporting (see Exhibit A). Mr. John Knott of *The Dallas Morning News* has drawn a number of excellent cartoons which relate to municipal as well as state and national affairs. The city also may furnish charts which depict the death rate, tax rate, fire losses, arrests, attendance at playgrounds, traffic accidents, and similar data. Maps are particularly useful in indicating the location of public buildings, dangerous street crossings, or special city zones.

This discussion of the use of the press has been founded on the assumption that newspapers are friendly to the interests of good government and of community betterment. This is the attitude held by the great majority of Texas papers, for most of them accept their responsibility to give

¹¹See, for example, the issue of Aug. 26, 1936, p. 11.

¹²See the issue of Aug. 25, 1936, p. 7.



*This cartoon, which was used in Memphis, Tennessee, is taken from Lyndon E. Abbott, *A Manual of Tax Collection Procedure for Texas Cities* (Austin, 1935), p. 80.

the affairs of local government a sympathetic reception in their columns. As the columnist of one Texas daily has put it:

But the Telegram's responsibility to its readers is for the interest of the city, and its desire is to present as faithful and complete a chronicle of city government news as it can.¹³

Not in every instance, however, is the press willing to co-operate, and bitter attacks occasionally may be directed at the city government. In the rare cases in which these attacks are made on an honest and efficient administration,

¹³*Temple Daily Telegram* (W. R. H. in the "Home Towner" column), Aug. 10, 1935, p. 3.

the best practice is for city officials to keep out of controversies by maintaining a discreet silence. With the passing of time, the attack will be partly or largely forgotten, and the city officials again can release news of actual accomplishments.¹⁴

In addition to furnishing news stories, the city also must print in newspapers the ordinances, financial reports, and all other reports and notices which are required by statute, charter, or ordinance to be published. The city, of course, must pay for the space occupied by these official notices and reports. Some cities have used as their official paper one of a very limited circulation, one known to very few of the inhabitants of the city.¹⁵ The official newspaper should be one which is well known and which has a large circulation.

Both as a measure of economy and as a means of furnishing the city better service than it would otherwise receive, some of the larger cities of the country publish their own journals which contain all the official notices and reports. In some instances, however, these city publications also contain informative articles which are prepared in the style of the regular newspaper article. *The City Bulletin*, published weekly by the City of Cincinnati at a cost to its subscribers of one dollar a year, regularly runs all legal notices, ordinances, resolutions, advertisements for bids, notices of civil service examinations, proceedings of the council, contracts awarded, and a list of all boards and commissions. Of more general interest in this publication, however, are the annual reports of the city manager and auditor, the occasional reprints of speeches delivered over the radio by members of the city organization, occasional short articles relating to some municipal activity, and the regularly printed column "Municipal Notes," which relates to happenings in other cities. The *Official Gazette* of the City of

¹⁴Mr. Daniel W. Hoan, in his two decades of service as mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has often dealt with a hostile press. See *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹⁵Herman C. Beyle, *Governmental Reporting in Chicago* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1928), p. 84.

Spokane, Washington, is a weekly journal which has a subscription price of fifty cents a year and deals exclusively with official notices and the like. Of a more general interest than either of the two foregoing publications is the *Toledo City Journal*, which is published by the Commission of Publicity and Efficiency of the City of Toledo, Ohio. Publication is weekly, with a subscription price of one dollar a year. In addition to the usual official notices, each issue contains on the first and second pages a well-prepared feature article which has a bearing on municipal problems. The nature of these articles is indicated by the following list of titles: "Review of Municipal Activities—1935," "The Story of the City Seal," "The Tax Rate of 1936," "Traffic Problems Today," "The Crime Prevention Bureau," and "The Merit System in Civil Service."¹⁶ No Texas city as yet publishes an official municipal journal, though the larger cities of the state might well investigate the desirability of doing so. The major consideration is one of economy in publishing official notices.

PAMPHLETS

The depression both increased the demand of citizens for information concerning their city governments and decreased the funds available for furnishing such information. In dealing with this dilemma, a number of cities turned to the use of pamphlets or folders, which are at once economical to print and easy to distribute. Pamphlets can be particularly effective, for information which is thus presented stands alone and is not surrounded by other items which might compete for the attention of the reader. Moreover, it may deal with any activity of the city government. Pamphlets published by various cities have dealt with such topics as the cost of government for a family of five, the per capita cost of government, a message from the manager to the council, the mayor's report to the council, the budget ordinance, the appropriation ordinance, new

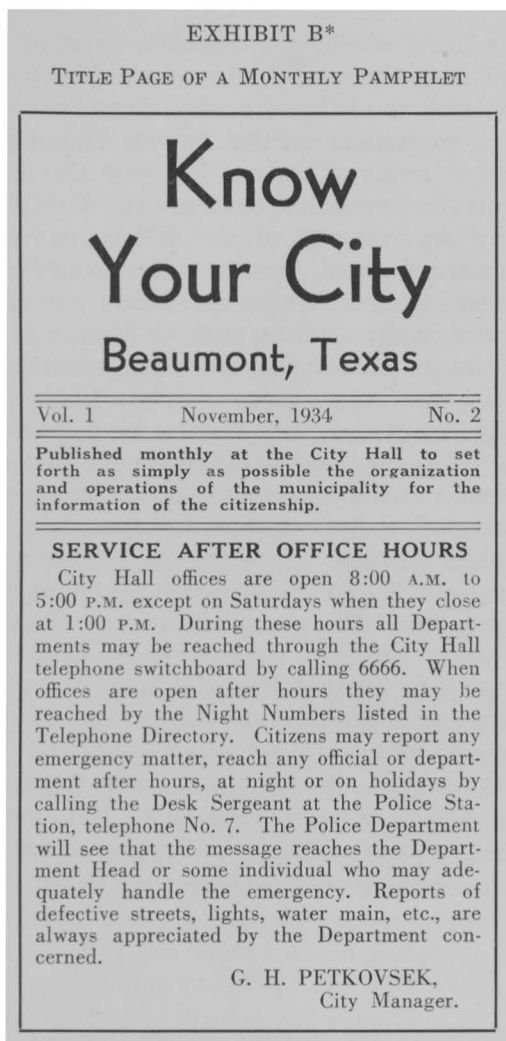
¹⁶In the order named, these articles appeared in the *Toledo City Journal* on the following dates of the year 1936: Jan. 4, Feb. 15, Feb. 22, Mar. 28, Apr. 18, and May 9.

ordinances, the need for a bond issue, city accomplishments, municipal problems, plans for the future, a comparison of costs and services, a P.W.A. program, the tax collection record, the budget message, water and electric utilities, and traffic safety.¹⁷

These pamphlets may be prepared either by the central administrative office or, when they relate to special services, by any of the several departments. In any case, however, they should be edited by the official who has charge of public reporting, for although the pamphlets may be short and the time required for their preparation brief, their form and appearance are important and should take shape under competent direction. Photographs, cartoons, charts, maps, and various styles of printing often may be used to advantage, and colored paper may increase the attractiveness of the folders. In this type of public reporting the primary objective should be that of presenting interesting, accurate information in a concise manner.

Publication may be either periodic or irregular. Perhaps the most desirable arrangement is to publish at stated intervals (monthly, quarterly, or annually) the pamphlets which deal with topics of recurring interest, and to publish irregularly those which concern items of an unusual nature or of special interest. The most commonly used and perhaps the best method of distribution is for the folders to be mailed or distributed along with the water or tax bills. The city must regularly pay the cost of distributing these bills anyway, and at very little additional cost the pamphlets may be placed in the same envelopes. In some instances information may be printed directly on some portion of the bill which otherwise would remain blank. For example, the City of Lufkin thus utilizes the back of the card on which monthly water bills are printed. House-to-house distribution of pamphlets also has been used effectively. In some cities pamphlets are mailed to citizens who have evidenced a special interest in their government.

¹⁷*Public Management*, Oct., 1934, p. 305.



*This exhibit was furnished through the courtesy of Mr. G. H. Petkovsek, City Manager of Beaumont, Texas.

That pamphlets are used in the public reporting activities of a number of cities is indicated by the fact that about a third of the cities which participated in the recent national survey have used this method.¹⁸ Although some

¹⁸*Ibid.*

Texas cities have employed pamphlets to advantage, only about one-fifth of the sample cities have used this method. In October, 1934, the City of Beaumont published the first of a series of pamphlets entitled "Know Your City." They are designed to acquaint the citizens with the number and quality of services rendered by the city. Exhibit B, a reproduction of the title page of one of these pamphlets, contains information about service after hours and is of interest to all citizens. These pamphlets are attractively printed on blue paper, and the position of each in the series is indicated by its volume and number. Beaumont also has published and distributed along with its tax statements a four-page folder entitled "Tax Paying Made Easier," which lists several plans for making tax payments and which also gives an account of the services which the taxpayer receives for his money. San Antonio has distributed by this same method a folder entitled "Facts for the Taxpayers." Dallas also prepares small pamphlets which are mailed with the water and tax bills. The pamphlets of one of these series, "City of Dallas, Business Affairs," contain cartoons and charts as well as textual material and deal with problems which arise in connection with fire protection, traffic safety, garbage removal, and other municipal activities. During 1934 Amarillo distributed about 30,000 folders with water bills. Other cities, among them Houston, Abilene, El Paso, Borger, Denton, McAllen, Odessa, and Sweetwater, in the past have distributed pamphlets on various municipal subjects.

SIGNS

Public reporting for present purposes has been defined broadly to include not only the devices which furnish information, but also those which arouse and sustain public interest. Commercial advertisers long have known that the attention of the public may be commanded by the use of billboards, signs, posters, and other similar devices; and it is only reasonable to suppose that the same public which is attracted by the signs of private corporations would, if

given the opportunity, also be interested in signs which relate to municipal affairs.

As an absolute minimum in the use of signs, each building owned by the city should be marked. Not only would these signs advertise municipal services, but they also would, particularly in some of the larger cities, be valuable aids to those visiting the various public buildings. The mere fact that a water plant is not privately owned is not a sufficient excuse for its being unmarked. Then, too, small signs should be used within the buildings not only to direct visitors to the various departments, but also to point out what services may be received in each.

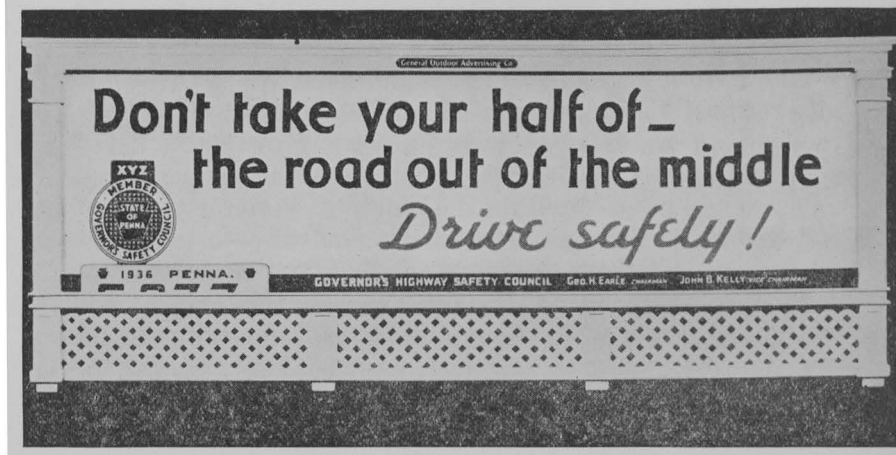
Further, signs should be erected at construction projects. The contractor's name is always displayed. Why should not the city's sign be equally prominent? If, instead of being confronted only with the usual disheartening DETOUR, the motorist could come upon an attractive sign-board indicating the construction of a modern underpass, his feeling of resentment would give way to one of civic pride.

Far from being restricted to public buildings and construction projects, signs often may be displayed to excellent advantage in connection with a number of miscellaneous municipal activities: for example, in connection with recreation programs, tax collection campaigns, and traffic safety drives. Exhibit C shows a billboard that is being used in a state-wide traffic safety campaign in Pennsylvania. The City of Austin recently erected at a busy intersection directly in front of the State Capitol a sign in the form of a large graduated thermometer; for each traffic fatality of the year an additional space is painted red, and the height of the red column grimly warns the motorist.

In addition to signs, several similar devices may be used. Bulletin boards often may be placed advantageously not only in the city hall but also in parks, libraries, playgrounds, and business districts. Some of the smaller cities of the state have used posters to excellent advantage. The city secretary of Nacogdoches, for example, prepared a number of posters relating to property valuation, tax collections,

EXHIBIT C*

BILLBOARD USED IN SAFETY CAMPAIGN



*This photograph appears in *Public Safety*, July, 1936, p. 22, and is reproduced here through the courtesy of the National Safety Council, permission coming directly from Mr. Ralph W. Thompson, Associate Editor.

and current expenditures, and used them to illustrate his talks before local civic groups. In the Dallas city hall an organization chart hangs near the entrance, and mural paintings portray the growth of municipal functions, the addition of new departments, the expansion of others, the completion of public works projects, changes in the form of government, and other important municipal events. Thus even the decorations within a building may relate to the city government. After an automobile had satisfactorily passed a "safety lane" inspection by city policemen in a recent traffic safety campaign in the City of Austin, a blue sticker indicating approval was placed on the windshield. The most spectacular of these various methods for arousing public interest is the use of banners festooned across downtown streets, a device which has been used by several Texas cities during tax campaigns.

As a method for contacting the public, the use of signs is largely unexploited in Texas cities, for with the exception

of marking buildings and offices, only a few of the cities studied make use of this device. In these exceptional instances the signs usually are on incoming highways and contain some general information about the city. Signs, posters, bulletin boards, and similar devices often may be prepared with little expense, especially if the work is done by employees of the city.

MOTION PICTURES

It is now possible to put in motion and accompany with sound effects the messages which in other years were painted on billboards or drawn on posters. Motion pictures have captured the public fancy and at present constitute in all probability the most popular form of entertainment in America, for the movies possess universal appeal, cutting through economic and social lines and providing diversion for both young and old. Here, then, is a potent if undeveloped field for civic education, one the potentialities of which have long been recognized.¹⁹ Movie-goers seldom see community happenings on the screen, although short films picturing municipal services have not only the action of the usual picture but also the added feature of local interest.

Winnetka, Illinois, a city of about 12,000 population, owns a projector, camera, and screen, the total outfit being purchased at a cost of about \$500.²⁰ Films concerning municipal services there are shown in homes, clubs, schools, and churches, the length of time for the whole performance being less than an hour. The titles of the films, free from propaganda, emphasize services rather than personalities. During the year the city manager carries the camera in his car and takes shots of the various city activities, and

¹⁹See Charles Frederick Higham, *Looking Forward* (Alfred A. Knopf Co., New York, 1920), pp. 143-153; Morris Llewellyn Cooke, *Our Cities Awake* (Doubleday, Page & Co., New York, 1918), pp. 223-224.

²⁰H. L. Woolhiser, "Motion Pictures as a Public Reporting Medium," *Public Management*, Sept., 1931, pp. 289-291.

the stock of films is thus revised from year to year. Before any city purchases cinema equipment, however, a close study should be made of the cost of the equipment, film, and developing. It is estimated that about 10,000,000 people have seen the films which were prepared by Detroit, Michigan, in 1933.²¹ These films were of sufficient interest and were short enough (a showing required about three minutes) to be added to the news reels. Twenty-six of these shorts were released, one each week, and were shown in Detroit and surrounding cities with the object of informing citizens of the low cost of governmental services. A project of the Texas State Highway Patrol is the showing of traffic safety reels to schools, civic clubs, and the general public, the equipment being transported in the white "Traffic Safety Education" car of the department. In Austin more than 9,000 people attended the initial showing.

At present, Texas cities make very little use of motion pictures, only about 10 per cent of the sample cities ever having used this method of reporting, and none of them owning a motion picture camera. Dallas has reels relating to traffic safety and public health. The Fort Worth Park Board owns films concerning parks and playgrounds. Private citizens in McAllen and Sweetwater have made motion pictures of city activities, and these pictures have been projected in local theaters as well as in homes and clubs. Beaumont has used slides in tax campaigns, and Port Neches has shown slides which relate to several topics. Graham owns a number of slides which picture subjects of historical interest as well as the activities of the various city departments. In each of these instances the films or slides have been shown by the theater without cost to the city.

The potentialities of motion pictures for public reporting constitute a vast and almost untouched field. Auburn, Maine, recently obtained free of charge from the National Board of Fire Underwriters a film concerning fire losses

²¹J. M. Leonard, "Ten Million See Detroit's Municipal Motion Pictures," *Public Management*, Feb., 1935, p. 53.

and fire prevention which had a direct bearing on the work of the local fire department.²² Texas cities should investigate the possibility of borrowing from national organizations (for example, the National Safety Council) films that relate to the functions of the city. An interesting possibility is that Texas cities, by working through the League of Texas Municipalities, could arrange for interchanging films in a state-wide program of education on health, traffic safety, crime detection, fire prevention, sanitation, city planning, recreation, and similar topics. By the use of animated pen pictures, reels might be shown on the city budget or on other aspects of municipal finance. Short films distributed by this central agency could doubtless be shown in most theaters without cost to the city, and also could be shown in schools, recreation halls, and city parks.

EXHIBITS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

That Texans are interested in public exhibits and demonstrations is evidenced by the continuing popularity of the state fair as well as of many county and regional fairs. The cities of this state should take advantage of the people's desire to observe and participate in a public spectacle. Municipal exhibits may relate to any or all of the various city departments and may be either formal or informal. Exhibits of the latter type usually are rather simple and are kept constantly in view in the various city offices. Pictures, models, charts, and maps in the departmental offices constitute the customary informal exhibit. A formal exhibit, on the other hand, implies the use of a rather elaborate display which is widely advertised, which is kept open to the public for a limited period of time, and which is held in a building or room specially prepared for the purpose.

The concept of formal exhibits is not a new one, for not only have they been used in the past, but their worth has been proved. Twenty-seven years ago, for example,

²²*Public Management*, Oct., 1934, p. 307.

the New York Bureau of Municipal Research sponsored a highly successful budget exhibit, and in the following year, 1910, more than a million people attended a similar exhibit which was staged by New York City.²³ The use of formal exhibits has spread throughout the country: in 1934 they were attended by 4,000 people at Berkeley, California; by 70,000 at Cincinnati, Ohio; by 20,000 at Kalamazoo, Michigan; by 8,000 at Oakland, California; and by 5,000 at Pasadena, California.²⁴ Some Texas cities, among them San Antonio, Sweetwater, and Childress, have had special budget or finance exhibits; and El Paso, in initiating a drive for civic beauty, sponsored a highly attractive flower show at a city park. County and regional fairs offer exceptional opportunities for many Texas cities to prepare exhibits, booths in many instances being available to the city free of charge. Dallas has a special police exhibit at the state fair. So effective are formal exhibits that one taxpayer's association has recommended that cities each year set aside a "Municipal Day" when the public is invited to an open house in which all the municipal activities are displayed.²⁵ During a recent open house and exhibit held at Berkeley, California, the citizens were given inspection tours on busses.²⁶

Demonstrations, as the name implies, differ from exhibits in that city employees enact the performance of some service rendered by the city. These demonstrations may be held either in addition to or in conjunction with exhibits and may relate to any of a number of services (for example, fire fighting, first aid, or special police tactics). The use of drill towers is particularly adapted to public demonstrations by the fire department. During fire prevention week Houston holds special fire drills and has a parade of the Fire

²³A. E. Buck, *Public Budgeting* (Harper & Bros., New York, 1929), p. 426.

²⁴*Public Management*, Oct., 1934, p. 302.

²⁵"Citizens Watch Their Governments in Action," *The American City*, Mar., 1935, p. 77.

²⁶Hollis R. Thompson, "Berkeley's Annual 'Open House' Attended by 5,000 Citizens," *Public Management*, May, 1934, p. 154.

Department. The Henderson Fire Department also observes a full program during the same week. The Denton department holds open house, and firemen explain the use of various pieces of apparatus. The Waco department gives first-aid demonstrations before the luncheon clubs of the city.

Public demonstrations by the police department have aroused considerable interest in several Texas cities. The pistol team of the Beaumont Police Department gives an occasional demonstration, and special drills are held by the departments in Wichita Falls and Mineral Wells. In the giving of a public demonstration by the fire department, police department, or any other branch of the city government, it is imperative that the performance be carefully planned and painstakingly rehearsed. Impromptu demonstrations are dangerous and are likely to give the public a distasteful impression of the organization involved.

Exhibits and demonstrations should be advertised judiciously, and they gain their greatest effectiveness when used jointly, for each is supplementary to the other. Each gives the public something definite by offering physical evidence of the services of the city government. Much yet remains to be done in this field by Texas cities, however, for more than half of the cities included in this survey make no use whatever of either of these two allied devices for public reporting.

CHAPTER III

CURRENT REPORTING (Continued)

The preceding chapter discusses the methods of current reporting which appeal primarily to the sense of sight. Any system of current reporting which stops with these methods, however, neglects another important set of devices which depend upon establishing a direct contact between city officials and citizens. Such a contact not only increases the interest of many who benefit from visual reports but also gains the notice of others who give little or no attention to such reports. Through direct contact with city officials, the citizen not only can be given information but can be impressed with the importance of his own place in municipal government. The task of reporting by direct contact would assume prohibitive proportions if the city officials should set out to interview individual citizens. The secret of successful reporting by this method lies, for the most part, in dealing with groups or organizations.

THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In most cities the largest single organized group consists of the students who attend the public schools. Although school children are not yet voters, they are the citizens upon whom the cities of the future must depend. Moreover, students should have their attention directed to their government, for they are at an impressionable age and their interest is easily enlisted. Finally, some of the benefits of city-school coöperation are immediate, for one of the surest and quickest ways to command the attention of adults is through their children.

If the voter has in the past misused, abused, or neglected his power, the hope for good government in the years to come lies in training the electorate to a degree commensurate with the responsibility imposed upon it. Obviously, this process of training cannot be completed overnight, but

must result from long-continued effort which should have its inception in the schoolroom. The public schools unquestionably should accept the challenge to prepare young citizens for the civic responsibility which, as they grow older, they must assume. In fact, it is primarily to educate youth to qualify for the duties of citizenship that schools are maintained as a public function. Civic education is the basis of a democratic system, and schools are the outstanding agencies for civic instruction.¹

Despite their importance as agencies for citizen training, however, the schools are often overlooked by the city. A mere tacit understanding between teachers and municipal officials that classes are welcome to visit the city hall and the municipal plants is insufficient; city officials should take the initiative in coöperating actively with the schools. Several different methods may be used for developing a well-rounded plan for public reporting wholly within the functions and purposes of the schools.

Of these methods the use of talks before student bodies is the most common and can be one of the most effective. On the whole, however, Texas cities fail to utilize fully this means of citizen training, for most talks by city officials are made only on special occasions and before general assemblies, rarely before individual classes. In fact, almost half of the sample cities make no use whatever of talks before student groups.

School authorities welcome frequent, well-organized talks by city officials; unprepared, rambling discussions, however, are not so welcome. In the preparation and delivery of these talks, several points should be observed. First, the talk should be phrased in simple, nontechnical language. Second, each year a new series should be prepared. Third, particular attention should be given to coöperating with high school classes in civics; both the services rendered by the city government and the agencies which perform these services should be explained. Fourth, talks of a technical nature should be given to special classes; for example, the

¹Charles E. Merriam, *op. cit.*, pp. xi-xiii.

purification of city water could be explained to classes in science, and the computation of the tax levy to classes in arithmetic. Fifth, in order to make the talks as interesting as possible, use should be made of maps, charts, and models. Sixth, special talks should be prepared and delivered during campaigns for public safety, fire prevention, tax collection, and the like.

When properly conducted, various types of contests can be used to advantage. An essay contest sponsored by the police department of one of the state's largest cities prompted the school children of that city to write 13,000 essays on the subject "How Can I Spend My Vacation in Safety?" Five of the sample cities reported that they sponsor essay contests. On the question of traffic safety, students in Dallas high schools have written essays and have engaged in debates, all police department files being made available for their use. Contests also may be conducted in making posters, the winners receiving prizes and having their posters displayed in business houses. City beautification, fire prevention, public health, the use of the library, the expenditure of tax money, and countless other problems offer subjects to be used in conducting essay, debate, or poster contests. Not only the city but any of the various civic clubs or the chamber of commerce may sponsor these contests. Two or three such contests a year, given good publicity, will do much to arouse interest in the essential, day-to-day services performed by the city government.

More enduring than contests are clubs which are organized among school children. At Port Arthur a Junior Police Force, composed of boys who are selected on a basis of scholarship and character, assists in controlling traffic at street intersections near schools, aids in parking cars, and works with the regular policemen on special occasions. Sufficient attention was attracted that the boys were pictured in action in a movie news reel. Of the various types of clubs, the greatest attention has been attracted by the junior traffic patrols. Each such patrol should have

an appropriate name, a set of records, a system of promotion, and a period of training. If possible, the boys should have uniforms, or at least badges. More than one-third of the cities studied have used junior traffic patrols. Similar organizations may deal with other problems, for example, with fire prevention, city beautification, and health standards. Through such active participation in the municipal service, schoolboys should come both to appreciate the services rendered by the city and to respect its officials and employees.

Of an even more spectacular nature than student organizations is the annual "Boys' Day." On this occasion the city government is turned over to boys elected to the various city offices by their classmates. Waco also has a "Girls' Day" when girls are allowed to run the city. When the student election is in progress, the city should furnish details of the qualifications of officials, information concerning immediate problems, and plans for the future. Arrangements should be made for inducting the newly elected student-officials into office. During "Boys' Day" city officials should acquaint the student-officials with the personnel, plants, equipment, methods of operation, and the daily problems of the various departments. This method of familiarizing the young citizens with both the authority and the responsibility borne by municipal officials is used by 43 per cent of the cities studied.

Less spectacular than the preceding methods, but more closely related to the day-to-day routine of teaching, is the distribution of city pamphlets and reports to the schools. The annual consolidated report as well as departmental and functional reports not only should be placed in the school library but also should be used for reference in civics classes. Despite the advantages which result from this use of city reports, only 13 per cent of the cities which were studied distribute them to schools.

The major responsibility for the civic education of students rests, of course, upon the school teachers, but an important responsibility for coöperating with the teachers

rests upon city officials. That many city officials are evading this responsibility is indicated by the fact that one-fourth of the cities studied make no use whatever of the schools in their public reporting activities.

CIVIC AND BUSINESS CLUBS

Just as students can be reached through the schools, so can adults be reached through civic and business clubs. This method of keeping in touch with the public is of particular importance for the reason that the outstanding citizens of a city generally may be found in the membership of these groups. In fact, so necessary is the coöperation of civic clubs to the success of a program of public reporting that 12 per cent of the city managers who participated in the recent nation-wide survey consider coöperation with these groups to be the most important of all the various methods of contacting the public. The only other type of reporting which a greater percentage consider more effective is newspaper reporting.²

The most effective means for enlisting the assistance of these organizations in the affairs of the city government is found in the talks made before them by city officials. The official who has charge of public reporting should supervise the preparation of a number of short, interesting talks by the various members of the city administration. A list of the subjects then should be given to the program chairman of each of the local civic clubs. This plan has been used with excellent results. In a recent national survey it was indicated that talks are made before the following clubs, which are listed here in the order of the number of times they were mentioned: Rotary Clubs, civic and fraternal groups, chambers of commerce, women's clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, and Lions Clubs.³ Nearly a third of the talks had to do with municipal finance; other topics related to relief work, council-manager government, municipal

²*Public Management*, Oct., 1934, pp. 308-309.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 306-307.

government in the United States, federal-state-city relations, water supply, recreation and parks, traffic safety, and public utilities.⁴ Of the sample of Texas cities which were studied in the present survey, 79 per cent indicated that speeches are made before civic organizations and clubs. The activity ranges from no speeches in some of the small cities to approximately 250 a year in Dallas. Houston, Waco, and Mineral Wells each reported from 100 to 125 speeches annually; Fort Worth, Sweetwater, Corpus Christi, and Amarillo from 20 to 50; and El Paso, Beaumont, Harlingen, Midland, and Athens not less than 12. These talks were made by mayor or manager, fire marshal or chief, secretary, councilmen, police officers, engineer, attorney, and others.

Not only may these clubs be employed as a channel for reporting through speeches, but their active assistance may be enlisted for special campaigns. Thus, in Beaumont a highly successful tax collection drive was sponsored by the Young Men's Business League. In this instance, special committees were appointed by the League, and an intensive campaign was conducted in which use was made of newspapers, addresses, the radio, motion pictures, placards, and signs.

Although material assistance on community projects may be obtained from them, civic clubs, if undirected, tend to drift aimlessly or to pursue miscellaneous enterprises. Through the coöperation of city officials, however, some degree of teamwork may be brought about among them. Failure of city officials in their public reporting activities to coöperate with community leaders through direct contact with civic, business, and luncheon clubs results in the loss of a vital contact which is necessary to the creation and perpetuation of a coöperative, progressive civic spirit.

BUDGET HEARINGS

Texas statutes provide for the holding of an annual public budget hearing, for which the city council must fix the

⁴*Ibid.*

date and give public notice of the time and place.⁵ Any taxpayer has the right to be present and to participate. Obviously a group which meets in an official capacity for the express purpose of dealing with municipal problems is not only willing but anxious to obtain information about the city government. Annual budget hearings, however, offer more than an opportunity to report to citizens the receipts, costs, plans, and services of the city government; they also give dissatisfied taxpayers a chance to voice their sentiments officially. Budget hearings, then, not only offer an opportunity for reporting *to the public*, but they likewise afford an opportunity for reporting *by the public*. In fact, so important is its rôle in the budget process that the public is actually a part of the budget mechanism of the city.

By way of complying with the state statutes, most Texas cities perfunctorily provide yearly for a public hearing on the budget. Only in rare instances, however, are these meetings attended by any considerable number of citizens.⁶ Several citizens and city officials and perhaps a newspaper reporter constitute the typical group which attends. Who should be blamed for the usual failure of these hearings? Much of the blame, of course, may be placed upon the citizens. The responsibility for popularizing the hearings, however, rests upon the city officials who must conduct them. Other devices for public reporting should be used in making budget hearings attractive. In particular, advance releases to the press should explain peculiar or unusual problems which have arisen in making the budget. Oral or written invitations should be delivered to prominent taxpayers. Charts and diagrams may well be prepared to illustrate topics of special interest. In fact, every effort should be made to show that the budget is much more than a list of

⁵*General Laws of Texas, Regular Session of the Forty-second Legislature, 1931, Ch. 206, Sec. 16.*

⁶See Roscoe C. Martin, *A Budget Manual for Texas Cities* (Austin, 1934), p. 28. Nor are these hearings well attended in the country as a whole. See *Public Management*, Oct., 1934, p. 301.

anticipated receipts and expenditures—that it is a comprehensive plan which annually determines for the city the number of men employed, the quality and number of services, and the amount of taxes which must be paid.

Perhaps through no other contact with the government can the citizen have so vividly impressed upon him the importance of his official capacity in municipal affairs, for in the budget hearing he is extended the right to voice his opinion on the entire program by which the city government must abide for the year.

The same methods of dealing with the public which are used in conducting the budget hearings should also be followed when holding other meetings or hearings of a similar character. For example, some cities call special public conferences to deal with problems arising in connection with public utilities, city planning, and tax collecting. In each instance, the citizens who attend are interested in municipal problems and may rightfully expect to be given an accurate account of the affairs of the city.

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES

While budget hearings offer the possibility of obtaining the coöperation of a relatively large group of citizens once a year, the use of citizen advisory committees makes it possible to obtain from day to day an even more active coöperation from smaller groups. Through no other means, perhaps, can the city so effectively command the active assistance of its outstanding citizens as by appointing them to various advisory committees. A number of benefits may be expected to accrue from the use of these groups. First, many problems can be thus handled which the city, because of the lack of time or money, could not otherwise deal with. Second, the city government in this way makes direct use of the experience and intelligence of public-spirited citizens. Third, such committees, in furnishing advice on questions of a controversial nature, act as a buffer between the city administration and the public.⁷ Fourth, and most important

⁷Henry Traxler, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

from the viewpoint of public reporting, some of the most able citizens of the community thus gain a first-hand understanding of the problems which confront the city government. In referring to the work of citizen committees, a report of the City of Dallas says: "Throughout the municipal service, difficult problems are being solved and invaluable service is being rendered by advisory boards and commissions. Serving without pay, giving liberally of their time and thought, the members of these various agencies freely contribute to the government that which the government does not have money enough to buy."⁸

Committees may be formed to deal with any number of municipal problems. Of these problems, however, two are of sufficient importance that each city should organize and use citizens' committees in connection therewith. The first problem relates to city planning. Citizens of countless Texas cities daily are confronted with mute testimony to the absence of long-time planning. As a result of the lack of a rational program to guide public construction, these cities have crooked, confusing streets and inadequate sewer and water systems, to mention only a few of the many undesirable concomitants of unplanned growth. The second problem has to do with traffic safety. Since the worst congestion of traffic is within their boundaries, cities must be in the vanguard of the fight now being waged against the terrific toll in life and property that results from traffic accidents. Advisory committees on traffic safety serve the two important purposes of furnishing suggestions for making improvements and of impressing citizens with the importance of this acute municipal problem.

One of the most unusual types of citizen committees takes its name from the publicity which recently has been given the federal government's "G-men." Members are known as "T-men" and have as their duty the reporting of traffic violations. In Dallas this group is sponsored by the

⁸*Progress, An Official Report of Municipal Achievement in Dallas* (1935) p. 26. This report was published by the City of Dallas and is printed and bound to resemble a magazine.

Traffic Commission and the Traffic Division of the Police Department, while in San Antonio it has the support of a Chamber of Commerce committee which is assisted by the police department. Members are supplied with post cards upon which a list of traffic violations is printed. When a "T-man" sees a violation, he checks the offense, takes the automobile number, and deposits the card in the nearest mail box. A first offender receives a courteous letter, but repeated violations result in more drastic action.

Of the sample cities which replied to a question on the point, 46 per cent reported the use of advisory boards and commissions. City planning commissions are the most commonly used. Others deal with such varied activities as fire protection, health preservation, budget preparation, zoo management, city zoning, police protection, care of country clubs, permit issuance, building code appeals, park management, library management, welfare administration, traffic safety, civil service, telephone rate reduction, museum management, and the securing of federal aid for municipal projects. The membership of the committees varies from one to twenty-four, and the term of office usually is either two years or indefinite. Corpus Christi and Mineral Wells have general advisory committees which meet at the call of the mayor. Dallas has seventeen boards and commissions with a total membership of 126.

The chief difficulties encountered in the operation of advisory committees arise from the failure to make use of them after they are formed, and from their tendency to arrogate to themselves administrative powers and functions. As regards the first, meetings should be held regularly and definite programs should be mapped out; else a committee will prove worse than useless. As to the second, it need be said only that such a committee is *advisory* in character, and that it oversteps the proper bounds of its jurisdiction when it undertakes actively to administer the function or service for the consideration of which it was created. In committee action the citizen members should of course, take the initiative, but the proper city officials should direct

their efforts to the problems most urgently in need of attention.

PERSONAL CONTACT

The attitude of many citizens toward their city government is largely dependent upon their personal contacts with members of the municipal organization. Particularly is this true in small cities in which the majority of citizens are acquainted with the administrative officers, though even in metropolitan cities the element of personal relationship is significant, since many citizens come into daily contact either with the administrative officials or with subordinate city employees. A number of city officials, particularly those in the smaller cities, consider personal contact to be the most important method of keeping in touch with the public, and of the various methods of public reporting the city managers of the country rank personal contact fourth in importance.⁹ Even so distasteful a task as the collection of delinquent taxes becomes easier if those who owe the past-due amounts are extended every courtesy.¹⁰

The administrative head of the government, the mayor or manager, receives countless visits from citizens; in fact, it is estimated that 10 to 50 per cent of the time of city managers is thus occupied.¹¹ The ways of handling these callers differ, depending for the most part upon the size of the city. In small towns the open door policy is the usual practice, while in the large cities the callers generally are expected to make appointments.¹² In most cases the secretary asks the visitor to state his business and, if agreeable, sends him to a department head in case the problem can be thus handled. In order to reduce the time used in these interviews, a few managers find it expedient to meet some

⁹*Public Management*, Oct., 1934, p. 309.

¹⁰"How to Collect Delinquent Taxes," *Texas Municipalities*, Aug., 1936, pp. 200-205.

¹¹"A City Manager's Contact With the Public," *Public Management*, July, 1931, p. 235.

¹²*Ibid.*

of the callers in the reception room in the presence of others who are waiting.¹³ Callers who do not have special appointments should be given interviews in the order of their arrival. It goes without saying that citizens should be extended every courtesy when they visit an administrative office.

The public should be encouraged to attend the meetings of the city council, for the members of this agency of the city government are directly responsible to the electorate. As an incidental aspect of council meetings, public reporting is of considerable importance, for here the citizens can obtain first-hand information from those who are charged with forming the policies of their city.

Officials invariably have considerable correspondence with citizens, and the letters which they send out give either a favorable or an unfavorable impression. The letters should be timely, simple, direct, and friendly.¹⁴ Some cities have successfully used personal letters to increase their tax collections.¹⁵

As a result of both the multiplicity of its services and the public nature of its work, the city government receives numerous complaints. Those who make complaints are usually in a disturbed state of mind and require tactful treatment. Many complaints are justifiable and are valuable in suggesting ways to improve municipal services. In fact, so valuable are complaints of this type that one city invited them by furnishing the public with printed post cards which were specially prepared for the reporting of complaints.¹⁶ The public thus was encouraged to become intelligently critical about the services of the city. Many complaints, however, relate to trivial incidents which may be bothersome and unpleasant to handle. Whether or not the complaint is justifiable, the keeping of the good

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹⁴Henry Traxler, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

¹⁵"Wisconsin Municipalities Report to Their Citizens," *The Municipality*, Dec., 1935, p. 240.

¹⁶Morris Llewellyn Cooke, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-9.

will of the complainant is of prime importance, and the handling of all complaints therefore requires the utmost courtesy and a knowledge of how to deal with people.

Complaints should be handled promptly, and immediately after the disposition of each the complainant should be informed of the action taken. In small municipalities the complaints are handled by one man, generally the secretary, mayor, or manager, but in the large cities they usually are turned over either to the department involved or to a central complaint bureau. Regardless of the size of the city, a careful check should be made on the disposition of all complaints. In one city each complaint is recorded in triplicate. The first and second copies are sent to the department which is to handle the complaint, while the third is held in the manager's office for follow-up purposes. When the department has passed on the complaint, the original is returned to the manager's office with a notation in regard to the action taken, the second copy being retained by the department.¹⁷ Exhibit D is a complaint form which is used in the City of Marshall. The administrative head of the city should require a regular report to be made to him in regard to the nature and disposition of complaints.¹⁸

The good effects of a program of public reporting can be either increased or nullified by the courtesy or discourtesy with which citizens are treated by employees of the city. Policemen, meter readers, garbage collectors, firemen, and other municipal employees daily come into contact with the public. Grumpy, discourteous employees create ill will which, because of its personal nature, is almost impossible to counteract. On the other hand, pleasant, courteous employees do much to increase the effectiveness of a program of public reporting.

The concept which citizens hold of their city government is also influenced by the appearance of the city offices.

¹⁷"The Handling of Complaints," *Public Management*, Aug., 1931, p. 265.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 265-268.

EXHIBIT D*

FORM FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

CITY OF MARSHALL

ORDERS - INQUIRIES - COMPLAINTS

No.	Date
-----	------

Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

NATURE OF ORDER - INQUIRY - COMPLAINT

Received by _____

Referred to _____ Date _____

REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN

Date _____

Signature.

*This form is reproduced through the courtesy of Mr. H. J. Graeser, City Manager of Marshall, Texas.

Some city halls, with their gloomy offices, dingy corners, and arrays of cuspidors, give a distasteful impression of the city government which even superior service finds it difficult to erase.

Honesty should be the keynote of all public relationships. Administrative officials should be straightforward. Correspondence with the public should be accurate. Complaints should be handled promptly, and city officials should fulfill their agreements rather than try to pacify dissatisfied citizens with empty promises.

THE RADIO

Like motion pictures, the radio is a new and powerful device which may be used for the reporting of municipal activities. Of the two, the radio is perhaps the more powerful, for it offers a direct and instantaneous contact between the speaker and his hearers. Although the radio speaker projects his voice to an unseen and unnumbered audience, his relationship with his hearers sometimes possesses an intimacy which approaches that of personal contact.

While most radio programs are designed merely to entertain the listener, some broadcasts are educational. The use of the radio by colleges and universities, by departments of the Federal Government, by candidates for political office, by various leagues and associations,¹⁹ and by the cities indicates a growing public interest in radio programs of other than an entertaining nature. Although its use has experienced a phenomenal growth, the radio is as yet a new device, and as such possesses possibilities as an instrument for civic education which are largely unexplored.

Cities which use the radio should have the programs prepared under the direction of one who is experienced in radio work, for broadcasting is a specialized and technical

¹⁹For example, the National Municipal League and the American Political Science Association for several years have coöperated in sponsoring a "You and Your Government" series over the network of the National Broadcasting Company.

activity. Here, as in all other types of public reporting, the need for a trained person is evident. In order that radio talks may be printed in newspapers immediately after the broadcasts, written copies should be given to the reporters in advance.

A number of topics may be made the subject of municipal broadcasts. In several Texas cities talks by the mayor or manager on subjects of general interest have been well received. Individual departments of Texas cities also have prepared programs on fire prevention, traffic safety, community health, municipal finance, city planning, public recreation, reviews of new library books, and special problems. The Young Men's Business League of Beaumont recently sponsored a series of fifteen-minute broadcasts by six municipal officials over station KFDM.²⁰ Whereas about 19 per cent of the cities which participated in a recent nation-wide survey have at one time or another used the radio in their public reporting programs,²¹ approximately 25 per cent of the Texas cities which were studied in the present survey have thus used the radio. Of these latter cities about two-thirds pay no fee for the use of the broadcasting station, for many stations are eager to secure programs which relate to municipal activities.

Dallas is unique in that it operates a municipal radio station. This station, WRR, is managed by a director who is responsible to a radio commission of three members appointed by the city council. The station was installed in 1920 without expense to the taxpayers, being financed from revenue received from commercial advertising. Half the gross receipts go to the director, who pays all studio and program expense. The remaining half is used to pay for the operation and maintenance of the transmitting apparatus. Among the regular features of this station are talks by the Director of Public Health, talks on traffic safety and on

²⁰"Using the Radio to Acquaint the Public With Local Government Problems," *Public Management*, Mar., 1936, p. 88.

²¹This percentage was computed from data which appear in *Public Management*, Oct., 1934, p. 308.

general city government, and broadcasts by the Dallas Better Business Bureau. In addition to broadcasts over the the municipally owned station, Dallas officials sponsor occasional programs which are transmitted over WFAA and KRLD, other Dallas stations.

While the operation of a municipal radio in Dallas is exceptional, many of the larger cities of the state, through coöperation with private stations, have broadcasting facilities available. Use of the radio effectively supplements each of the other methods for currently reporting the activities of the city government, for the radio offers a contact with many citizens whose attention probably would not be gained by any of the other reporting devices.

In dividing the methods of current reporting into those which appeal to the sense of sight and those which depend on direct contact, Chapters II and III indicate the part each group should play in a program of municipal reporting. Each method should aim to create and sustain an enlightened public interest in city government, and hence should be used jointly with the others. As a matter of practical application, then, current reporting is a day-to-day process which utilizes various methods for keeping the public informed. On some occasions all methods of current reporting should be used intensively. Particularly is this true when the city sponsors some special campaign such as fire prevention, "clean-up," or health week. These various special weeks are almost universally observed, for only one of the cities studied does not sponsor them.

What methods are used by a city which has an effective plan of current reporting? News articles and printed pamphlets sustain public interest by furnishing attractive information. Signs and motion pictures direct attention to municipal services. Exhibits and demonstrations offer physical evidence of the work done by the city. City officials, by coöperating with schools and business clubs, assume their proper rôle in civic education. The active

participation of individual citizens is encouraged by appointing them to advisory committees and by popularizing the public budget hearings. Personal contacts with citizens are characterized by courtesy and honesty. And, when possible, radio programs relating to city affairs are presented.

These various methods of current reporting lose much of their effectiveness when used singly or sporadically. Rather, they should be included in a comprehensive program of public reporting. The following chapter, which discusses formal reporting, deals with the activities which must be used in conjunction with the foregoing devices in the formulation of such a program.

CHAPTER IV

FORMAL REPORTING

While one of the major purposes of current reporting is the creating and sustaining of a public interest in the city government, one of the chief aims of formal reporting is the satisfaction of an interest which already exists. Formal reports, therefore, may be of a comparatively specialized or technical nature. Programs of current and formal reporting should be used jointly, for the good effects of each is dependent, in part, upon the operation of the other. Thus the distribution of formal reports helps to satisfy the interest in the city government which is aroused by current reports.

Some formal reports benefit only the printing business. These reports, composed usually of compilations of tabular data that are of little use to anyone other than an administrative officer, are neither readable nor, to the public at large, interesting. About 20 per cent of one annual report, for example, is devoted to lists of births, deaths, and marriages! Formal reports not only should satisfy the interest which citizens hold in regard to their government, but should be attractive enough to command the attention of the public.¹ This responsibility is well stated in a recent annual report:

One of the most satisfactory methods of apprising the taxpayer of local governmental and fiscal activities is through the printed periodic report.

Municipal reports frequently contain so many tables and figures that they provide little interest to the casual reader. It is to the layman that these external reports should be directed.

With this thought in mind an earnest effort has been made to prepare the data in this report in such a clear and

¹See Phillips Bradley, *Making Municipal Reports Readable* (The New Hampshire Foundation, Concord, 1935), pp. 1-2.

concise manner as to make it understandable to all who may read it.

It is hoped that the narratives contained herein, touching on the several functions of government, will prove to be a simplified method of furnishing information relative to each function.²

Formal municipal reports are of two general types: (1) departmental and functional and (2) annual consolidated.

DEPARTMENTAL AND FUNCTIONAL REPORTS

Functional and departmental reports deal with special problems and are designed to serve special audiences. A number of the most successful reports are of this type.³ Because of their specialized nature, these reports can be given a unity and completeness which is difficult to attain in other types of reports.

Often it is desirable to organize a report on a functional rather than on a strictly departmental basis, for a functional report furnishes complete information on some one municipal problem or activity. Thus a functional report on health relates not only to the services performed by the city health department but also to the several activities of the water, recreation, and other departments which have a bearing on public health. Specifications for departmental and functional reports on sixteen different municipal activities have been prepared by The National Committee on Municipal Reporting.⁴ The individual departments of many cities are becoming more and more functionalized; consequently many departmental reports partake of a functional nature.

While the reports of different departments should be of a variety of styles in physical make-up and manner of presentation, each should contain fundamental information

²"Foreword," *Annual Report of the City of Topeka, 1935*, p. 8.

³The National Committee on Municipal Reporting, *Public Reporting*, p. 10.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 44-157.

concerning services, costs, problems, plans, and accomplishments. Also, a formal report of this type should contain facts relating to organization, functions, powers, standards of efficiency, and work methods; and information concerning the public property used by the department should be accompanied by recommendations for its more effective use.⁵ The same devices for presentation of information may be used in the departmental as in the annual consolidated report.⁶ Often the total figures of tables may be emphasized as well as clarified if they are depicted in charts or graphs. Per capita amounts and comparative data often may be used effectively.⁷ These reports may be printed or mimeographed in booklet form on paper of various colors. Whatever method of publication is used, they should be carefully written and made as interesting as possible.

Of particular significance are the reports of the finance department. These reports should show the sources and amounts of receipts, the purposes and amounts of expenditures, a consolidated balance sheet revealing the condition of each fund and segregating non-revenue funds, the condition of indebtedness (with a separate analysis of each bond issue and its debt retirement fund), comparative data from the past several years, and budget data for the coming year. Under no circumstances should capital assets—streets, parks, buildings, and the like—and capital surplus be listed along with the current assets and surplus in a balance sheet; these capital items should be in a separate

⁵These recommendations were taken from Herman C. Beyle, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-99.

⁶See pp. 69-76.

⁷Per capita figures may be misleading and hence should be used with caution. The population should be given, with an indication whether it is from the census or an estimate.

Comparisons may be made with preceding years, with the coming year (budget estimate), with other departments, with departments of other cities, with national or state averages, or with figures which have been set up as being typical or desirable. In using comparisons, reasons should be pointed out for variations.

capital fund in a consolidated balance sheet.⁸ The spirit of openness and coöperation exhibited by the Texas cities which have, throughout the depression, voluntarily furnished accurate financial reports to all interested persons or agencies has improved their credit ratings; for even though a city may be adversely affected by a depression, it has nothing to gain by being secretive in regard to its financial condition. Several cities which were visited in a recent survey of municipal indebtedness in Texas had either printed or mimeographed financial statements available for distribution.⁹ The length of these reports, of course, varies with the amount of information given, the size of the city, and the number of bond issues outstanding.

The number of copies published of any one issue of a departmental or functional report should be largely controlled by the demand, and the frequency of publication should be governed by the subject matter, the size of the city, and the purpose of the report. Reports by some departments should be made frequently: for example, those of the finance department in many cases should be made monthly, for the usefulness of fiscal information depends in part on its recency. Reports by other departments need be made no more often than perhaps once or twice a year. Equally as important as the frequency of reporting, however, is the regularity. It is an essential element of good practice that each report be one of a continuous series of communications to the public.¹⁰

Since functional and departmental reports are usually prepared for those who have some special interest in particular municipal activities, their distribution is simpler than that of current reports, the most important point being that every interested person, group, or agency should receive copies. Financial reports should be mailed to bond

⁸Lloyd Morey, *Manual of Municipal Accounting* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1927), pp. 80-82.

⁹J. T. Barton, *A Debt Administration Manual for Texas Cities* (Austin, 1936), p. 88.

¹⁰Herman C. Beyle, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

dealers and city creditors. Finally, the interchange of ideas between municipalities should be effected both by the inter-city exchange of these reports, and by placing them in the hands of research bureaus and leagues of municipalities.

Only about 6 per cent of the cities studied distribute one or more departmental reports, and no city regularly distributes formal reports from all departments. Fort Worth, Houston, Austin, and Dallas have prepared police reports, most of which have been mimeographed. Generally speaking, however, more is done in the reporting of finances than in any other field. Texas cities, then, have much to learn in the matter of using departmental and functional reports to best advantage.

THE ANNUAL CONSOLIDATED REPORT

The annual consolidated report, as contrasted with departmental and functional reports, summarizes information concerning all the various activities into a coherent story for the year, and is designed to furnish the information which the citizens as a whole need concerning their city government. There is a growing demand on the part of the people for this type of information.¹¹ The annual report does not discuss the various branches of the city government in as great detail as the individual departmental reports; rather, it presents a birds-eye view of municipal services as a whole. Persons and agencies of other than local residence are interested in these yearly reports: examples are bond dealers, city creditors, municipal leagues, research bureaus, contractors, and dealers in municipal supplies. If an annual report is distributed to all these groups, the resulting benefits are more than merely local; they are widespread.

If the annual consolidated report is prepared carefully, published promptly, and distributed discriminately, it serves a number of purposes for both citizens and city officials.

¹¹Clarence E. Ridley, "Annual Appraisal of Municipal Reports," *National Municipal Review*, Jan., 1936, pp. 26-29.

It furnishes the basis for making a yearly appraisal of municipal activities: city officials can use it in judging the effectiveness of their own efforts and citizens can use it in evaluating the ability of city officials. Further, through its use, comparisons may be made both with the activities of previous years and with the accomplishments of other cities. In addition to furnishing important information concerning the cost of services and the amount of receipts, the annual consolidated report summarizes accomplishments, analyzes current problems, describes the city government as a social institution, furnishes data for judging municipal officials, and presents a civic program for the future.¹²

Many officials object to annual reports on the ground that the cost of publication is prohibitive. In this regard, two factors should be considered: first, the cost should be investigated, and second, the good effects resulting from the publication of the report should be examined. Albert Lea, Minnesota (population 10,169), published 2,500 copies of a recent report at a total cost of \$105.71, a per copy cost of about four cents, and a per capita cost of approximately one cent. The report contained twenty-three pages of text, charts, and illustrations. Austin, Texas, with an estimated population of 68,960, published 1,200 copies of its 1934 report at a total cost of about \$800, or about sixty-seven cents a copy, or slightly more than one cent per capita. As one official of the City of Austin recently pointed out, the publication of this yearly report probably has been a contributing factor in making it possible for the city to get exceptionally favorable bids on bond issues sold in the spring of 1936.¹³ The marketability of the bonds of a city depends, in part, upon how widely known the city is, and Austin unquestionably has received excellent national advertising

¹²Wylie Kilpatrick, *Reporting Municipal Government* (Municipal Administration Service, New York, 1928), pp. 16-17.

¹³One of these issues, which bore a nominal rate of 3 per cent and which was to be retired within eight years, sold at a premium of \$12.50 per \$1,000.

through its annual reports. It is easily conceivable, then, that the publication of these reports may serve as a financial asset as well as a means for informing interested groups of the activities of city government.

There is no justification for the publication of a voluminous, expensive report, for concise reports are more effective. The length may vary from a few mimeographed sheets to fifty or more printed pages. The cost thus can be adjusted to the size and financial condition of the city. That cities are coming more and more to consider that money spent in preparing the annual consolidated report is well spent is indicated by the fact that during the past year a greater number of cities in the United States published high-grade reports than in any previous year.¹⁴

Special attention should be directed to the considerations which govern the value of the annual consolidated report after it is published. Four of these are important enough to warrant separate mention: they relate to the content, the methods of presentation, the time of publication, and the plan of distribution.

In the first place, the annual city report is prepared for many different individuals and groups, and its capacity to serve these various users depends to a great extent upon its contents.¹⁵ Although cities differ greatly in both size and the number of services performed, certain types of information always should be in the report. With exceptions in the cases of the introductory statement, table of contents, and letter of transmittal, which should appear in the first pages, the sequence of these various classes of information is adaptable to local conditions, depending on the discretion of the person who has charge of the preparation of the report.

¹⁴Clarence E. Ridley, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁵Outlines for the suggested contents of the annual consolidated report of a city may be found in The National Committee on Municipal Reporting, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-43, and in "Reporting Government to Citizens," *Public Management*, Feb., 1935, p. 40.

An introductory statement of a general character should be included, perhaps on the reverse side of the title page.¹⁶ The information in this statement should be set up so as to make the page a unit and should contain such items concerning the city as its area, altitude, date of settlement, date of incorporation, population, road mileage, and other pertinent facts.¹⁷

Next, a table of contents should always be included, for the various readers will be interested in different types of information and will need a key to the subjects treated in the report. The table of contents should, of course, be placed at the beginning of the report.¹⁸ An index at the end of the report also is desirable in order further to facilitate the finding of specific items.¹⁹ In addition to a table of contents and an index, a serial number should indicate the position of each report in the series of which it is a part.²⁰

Then the report should contain a letter of transmittal from the executive head of the city government to the council and people. This letter should not be worded in the trite, legalistic style of "In compliance with the provision of the city charter . . ."; rather, it should be a concise,

¹⁶K. R. B. Flint, *Suggestions Regarding the Preparation of Municipal Reports* (pamphlet prepared for the Vermont State Chamber of Commerce, no date), p. 2.

¹⁷Examples of introductory statements may be found in the *Twenty-sixth Annual Report of the City of Staunton, Virginia, 1935*; and *Bellows Falls Village Corporation (Vermont), Annual Report, 1935*.

¹⁸See examples in *Municipal Report, Austin, Texas, 1934*, p. 6; and *Annual Report of the City of Topeka, 1935*, p. 3.

¹⁹See the indexes in *Municipal Activities of Milwaukee for 1935*, pp. 156-157; and *New York Advancing: 1934-1935*, pp. 359-368.

²⁰Herman C. Beyle, *op. cit.*, p. 226. See example in *Annual Report of the Town of Rockingham, Vermont, 1936*, p. 1.

In the course of time, the preparation of an annual report may become traditional, thus increasing the importance of knowing the position of each in its series. See, for example, the *Two Hundred and Ninety-first Annual Report of the Town of Reading (Massachusetts) for the Year 1935*.

informal, and understandable summary of outstanding accomplishments, important problems, and recommendations for action. By way of contrast with the usual wording of these letters, consider the following passage:

Cincinnati rode out the year 1934 without any real difficulties. Taxes were paid in large proportion, expenses were met to the penny, services were maintained without interruption, and the morale of citizens and public employes continued on a high plane.

For this achievement our city has received widespread praise. This praise should spur us to a higher endeavor and to finer standards of service. It must not make us complacent or flabby-minded.²¹

An organization chart should reveal the lines of authority and responsibility, for a chart of this type is necessary to give the reader a usable concept of the structure of the city government. Although these charts may be prepared in several different ways, generally the lines of authority and responsibility extend from the top downward, showing the electorate, the council, and the executive in the upper part and the working units in the lower part (see Exhibit E). The chart may well be accompanied by a list of the names of the council members and of the city officials, including the department heads and the advisory boards and commissions.²² A brief statement should indicate whether these officers are elective or appointive (see Exhibit E), their terms of office, their compensation, and their duties.

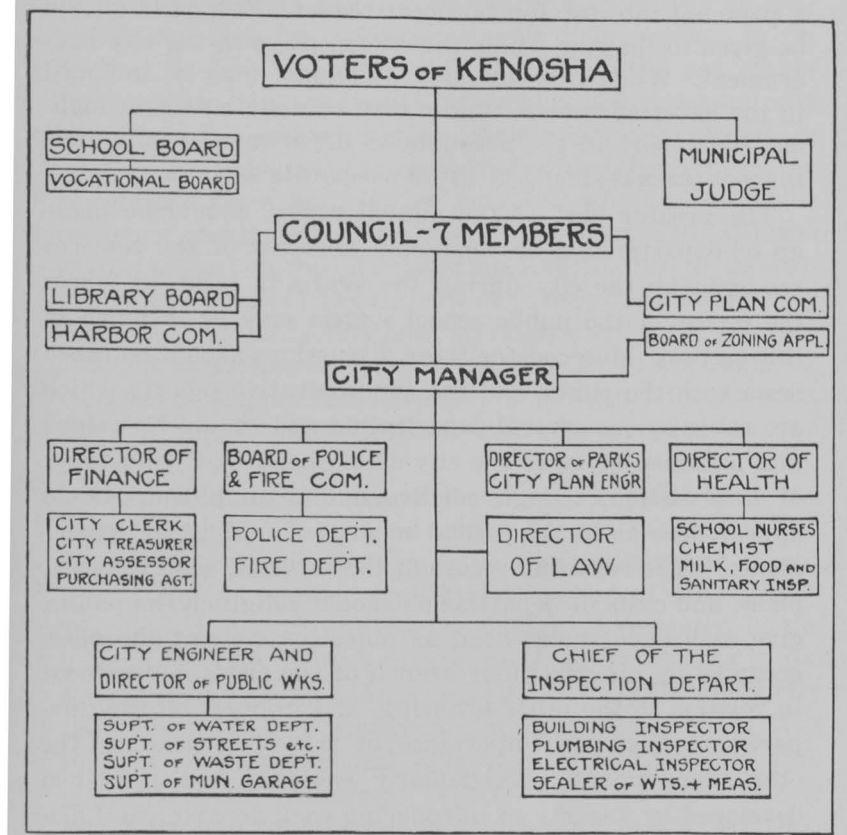
Also, the report should include a summary of the accomplishments of the year.²³ This resumé, stating briefly

²¹C. A. Dykstra, "The City Manager's Page," *Municipal Activities of the City of Cincinnati, 1934*, p. 1. The quoted paragraphs form the introduction of the letter of transmittal. The remainder of the letter is divided under the two main headings "The Year Just Passed" and "Looking Ahead."

²²See example in *Civic Affairs, Berkeley, 1934-35*, pp. 5-6.

²³See the summaries in *Progress, An Official Report of Municipal Achievement in Dallas (1935)*, p. 6; *Civic Affairs, Berkeley, 1934-35*, p. 9; and *Louisville, Municipal Activities, 1935*, p. 7.

EXHIBIT E*
ORGANIZATION CHART



1. THE PEOPLE BY BALLOT ELECT—
 - a. City Council (7 members)
 - b. Board of Education (7 members)
 - c. Judge of Municipal Court
2. THE CITY COUNCIL APPOINTS—
 - a. City Manager
 - b. Library Board
 - c. City Plan Commission
 - d. Harbor Commission
3. THE CITY MANAGER APPOINTS—
 - a. Board of Police and Fire Commissioners
 - b. Heads of all Departments
 - c. All other City employees
4. THE CITY MANAGER ACTS AS—
 - a. Administrative Head of City
 - b. Board of Public Works
 - c. Chairman of City Plan Commission
 - d. Harbor Master

*This chart appears in the *Fourteenth Annual Report of the City of Kenosha, Wisconsin, 1935*, p. 10, and is reproduced here through the courtesy of Mr. H. C. Laughlin, City Manager of Kenosha, Wisconsin.

what the citizen has received in services and what he has paid for these services, should be so arranged that it has a personal interest for the local reader. Emphasis should be given to the rôle which the citizen plays in the city government. While this summary statement may be included in the letter of transmittal or may be distributed throughout the report in the accounts of departmental activities, in most cases it should be given a separate section.

The greater part of the annual report should be made up of departmental or functional accounts of the services rendered by the city during the year. In some instances the report of the public school system may be included in this section. Material for these discussions should be taken from both the public and the administrative reports which are made by the several departments and should be welded into a unified story of the city as a whole. The same types of information, though condensed and simplified, should appear here as in the formal reports of individual departments.²⁴ The resulting record of the services, achievements, plans, and costs of departments should enlighten the public, give each department head an objective view of the place occupied by his particular branch of the city's government in relation to the other branches, and impress on each department head the importance of the work done by the other departments. Particularly effective is the method developed by one city of introducing each departmental discussion in the following manner:²⁵

Police Force

	Total expenditures for year.....	\$1,227,922.47
Employees—622	Per capita cost for year	2.63
	Cost to average property owner: yr.	2.80
	mo.	.23

²⁴See pp. 57-60.

²⁵*Municipal Activities of the City of Cincinnati, 1935*, p. 39. The expression "average property owner" as used here refers to the taxpayer whose property is assessed at \$4,000.

Similarly, the publicly owned utilities should be given special treatment.²⁶ Since utilities are at once both a source of revenue and an object of expenditure, they may be self-sustaining, may incur losses, or may yield profits. In reporting publicly the activities of utilities, the use of accounting terminology should be avoided, for it serves only to confuse the average reader. Simple language should indicate: (1) whether (as compared with other cities) the consumer's rates are high or low, (2) whether a surplus or deficit resulted from the last year's operation, (3) the saving or cost to the city resulting from its use of its own utility services, (4) the amount of taxes which would have been paid had the facility been privately owned, (5) whether a deficit made necessary a contribution from tax funds or whether a surplus made possible a reduction in tax rate, and (6) the saving or loss per unit cost of operation, per consumer, and per capita.²⁷

The financial statement of the city also should be in the report. It may be included in the section devoted to the finance department, or it may be summarized and placed in a section of its own, probably at the end of the report.²⁸ The same types of information should be presented in the financial section of the annual consolidated report as in the formal report of the finance department.²⁹ While simplicity should be an aim in preparing the financial statement, it is imperative that essential data not be sacrificed to simplicity; for the statement is used by bond dealers, city creditors, and others who desire comprehensive information. Illustrative material may be used advantageously in presenting financial data. Exhibit F, for example, pictures the sources of income and the purposes of expenditure of the City of Berkeley, California.

²⁶See the section on utilities in *Municipal Report, Austin, Texas, 1935*, pp. 38-43.

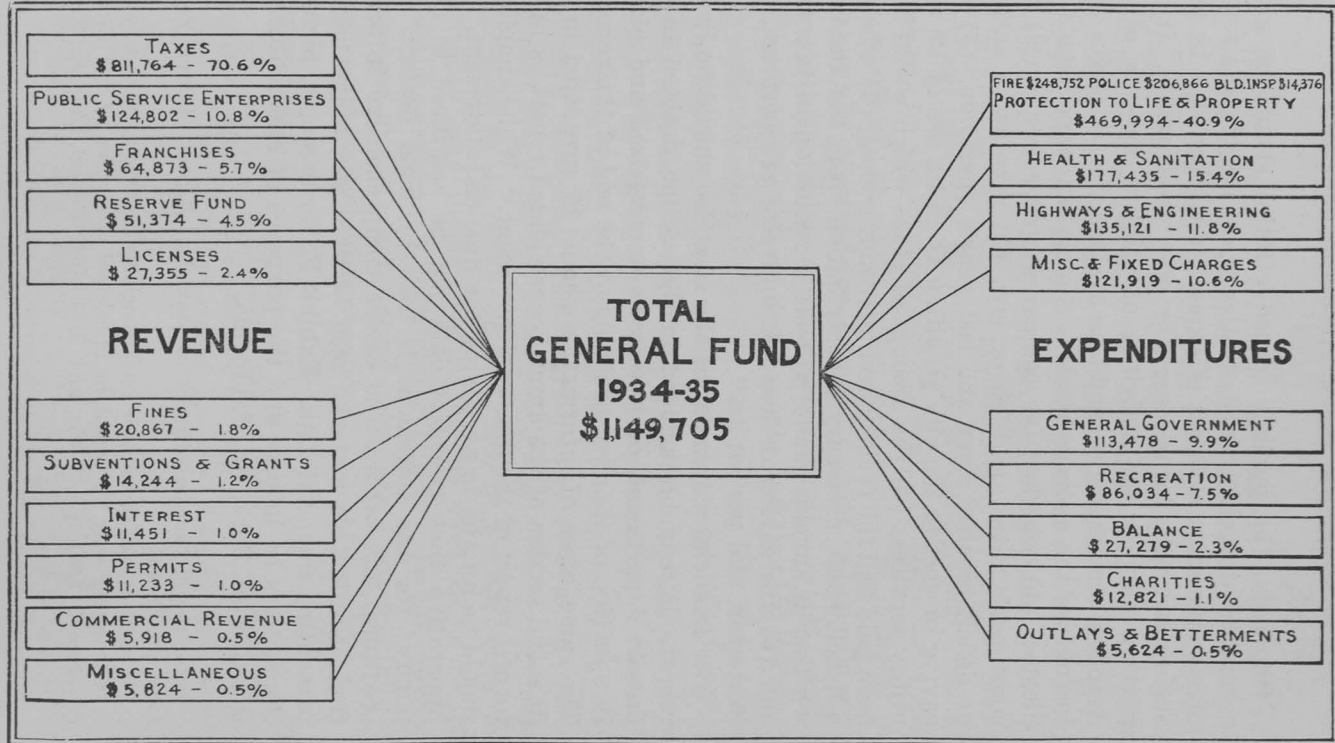
²⁷The National Committee on Municipal Reporting, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁸Examples may be found in *Municipal Activities of the City of Cincinnati, 1934*, pp. 7-16; and *Municipal Report, Austin, Texas, 1934*, pp. 52-63.

²⁹See pp. 58-59.

EXHIBIT F*

WHERE THE CITY GETS ITS MONEY AND WHAT IT IS SPENT FOR



*This chart appears in *Civic Affairs, Berkeley, 1934-35*, p. 17, and is reproduced here through the courtesy of Mr. Hollis R. Thompson, City Manager of Berkeley, California,

The annual report should contain a discussion of plans for the future, for citizens are interested in policies which are to be adopted for the extension and improvement of services, the adding of new activities and enterprises, and the financial program which it is proposed to pursue. A brief summary of these plans may be given in the letter of transmittal, though it is generally more effective to summarize and explain the objectives separately.³⁰ Included with the proposed program should be a list of recommendations for improvements in service.³¹

Finally, the value of the report to the average citizen may be increased by including in it a short directory to be used by those who wish to get in touch with certain branches of the city government. Exhibit G is a table of such information which appears on the outside back cover of *Progress, An Official Report of Municipal Achievement in Dallas*. Through its use, the citizen concerned with some special municipal problem can find out which official or department to contact. Still another annual report has on the last page, just inside the back cover, the phone numbers of the fire department, police department, superintendent of water-works, board of education, high school, and city hall.³² This directory may be on some page which otherwise would remain blank, and it should list the names of departments or titles of officials, the office addresses, and the phone numbers.

While the usability of the annual consolidated report depends largely upon the content, its power to arouse and sustain the interest of those who read it rests for the most part upon the manner in which the content is presented. Clarity, simplicity, and brevity are essential. Cities are improving their methods of presenting information, for

³⁰Examples may be found in *Louisville, Municipal Activities, 1935*, pp. 5-6; and *City Affairs, Two Rivers, Wisconsin, 1934*, p. 10.

³¹See the list in *Annual Report of the City Auditor of the City of New Rochelle, New York, 1935*, pp. 18-19.

³²See *Town of Stratford, Connecticut, Annual Report, 1935*, p. 60.

EXHIBIT G*
INFORMATION DIRECTORY

SUBJECT	ASK AT
Air Travel	Municipal Airport
Books and Periodicals	Public Library
Building Regulations	Building Inspector
Care of Trees and Shrubbery	City Forester
Communicable Disease Control	} Health Department
Contagious Diseases	
Crime Prevention	Police Department
Employment for Women	Welfare Department
Family Problems	Welfare Department
Fire Hazards	Fire Marshal
Fire Prevention	Fire Marshal
Food Analysis	Health Department
Health Precautions	Health Department
Location of Streets	City Plan Engineer
Maps, City of Dallas	Public Works Department
Ordinances, Interpretation of	City Attorney's Office
Ownership and Size of Property	Tax Assessor
Personal Legal Problems (For those unable to pay a lawyer)	Legal Aid Bureau
Platting New Subdivisions	City Plan Engineer
Procedure of City Business	City Secretary
Public Contracts and Records	City Secretary
Sanitary Standards	Sanitary Engineer
Storm and Sanitary Sewerage	Public Works Department
Tax Assessment and Collection	Tax Assessor and Collector
Tax Rates and Bonded Debts in Other Cities	Asst. Director of Finance
The Problem Child and Juvenile Delinquency	Policewoman
Topography of City	Public Works Department
Utility Services	Supervisor of Public Utilities
Vital Statistics	Health Department
Water Service	Waterworks Department
Water Sprinkling Systems	Waterworks Department

*This directory is reproduced through the courtesy of Mr. Hal Moseley, City Manager of Dallas, Texas.

the physical make-up of annual reports was better in 1935 than ever before.³³

The organization of the report should give space to the various municipal activities in accordance with their importance. The departmental or functional activities may be

³³Clarence E. Ridley, *op. cit.*, p. 29. An enlightening discussion of the characteristics of recent municipal public reports is Elton D. Woolpert's "Annual Municipal Reports—1936 Models," *Public Management*, Oct., 1936, pp. 297-300.

presented in such a fashion that the reader can gain a concept of the city government as a unified whole, rather than as a group of individual departments. Perhaps it would add to the unity of the report if the discussions of the various departments were arranged in the same order in which they are listed in the organization chart.³⁴

Figures should be presented in an understandable form, and only those which relate directly to the topic at hand should be used, for extraneous material only confuses the reader. The total annual cost of rendering each municipal service is important, though these gross figures often gain additional significance if they are expressed in amounts per capita or per average taxpayer. A number of clever and effective comparisons may be made between the costs of municipal services and other services; for example, the following statement relates to the cost of garbage collection to the average taxpayer: "For about 175 trips the truck makes to his house each year he pays 58c—less than he would pay a laborer to rake his yard one time."³⁵ Also, costs may be effectively expressed as amounts per unit of work. Thus, paving costs may be expressed as cents per square yard, and garbage removal costs as cents per ton. Further, it is often desirable to set forth accomplishments in units of performance; then comparisons may be made between the activities of different years without making allowance for price fluctuations. Again, information concerning units of performance often may advantageously be set forth as a ratio: for example, the total arrests per policeman. In presenting numerical data, use may be made of the average, median, or mode of a group of figures. Percentages of variation between different years may be computed by taking the data for one year as a base and expressing those of the remaining years in relation to this base. Maximum and minimum figures often may be used

³⁴K. R. B. Flint, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

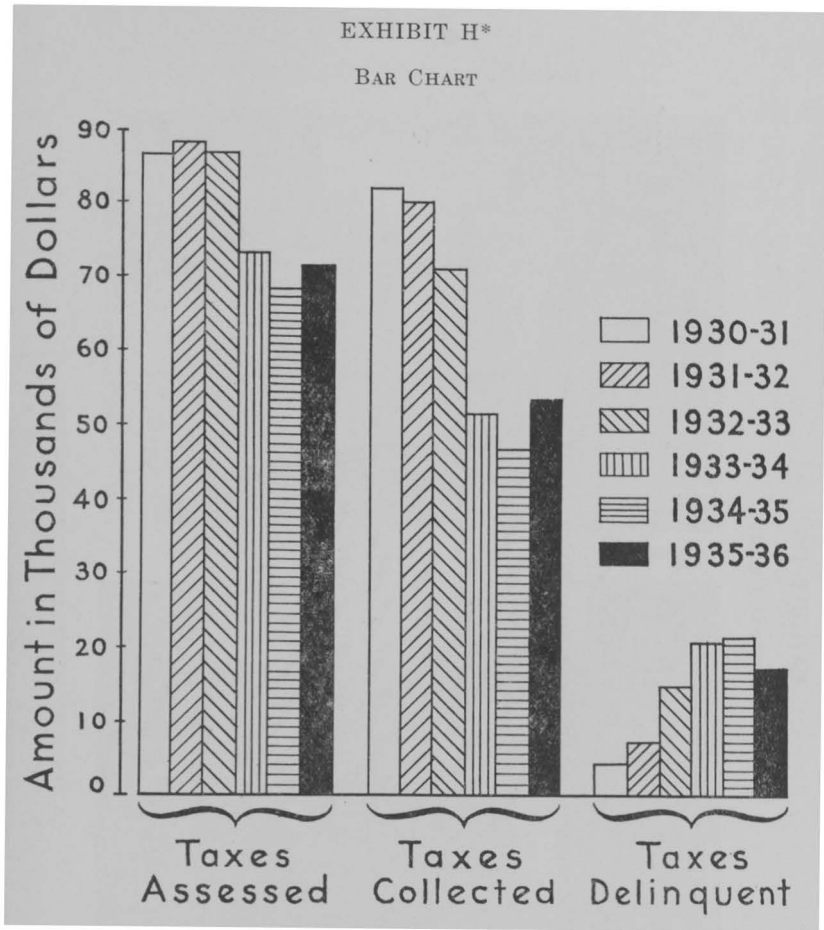
³⁵*City Taxes, Cigarettes, and Chewing Gum* (a mimeographed pamphlet prepared by the City of Columbus, Georgia, in Dec., 1935), p. 2.

to advantage in presenting salary ranges and similar information. Finally, groups of related figures should be placed in tables rather than in serial enumeration. Some tables should be of a comparative nature and may contain information for the current year, for preceding years, and for the coming year (budget estimates), and for other cities. Other comparisons may be made with state or national averages or with figures which have been set up as typical or desirable.

Since the purpose of figures is to tell a story, the use of charts and graphs is particularly desirable, for these devices, perhaps more than any others, impress upon the reader the import of numerical data. Bar charts, pie charts, arithmetic graphs, and logarithmic graphs each may be used to excellent advantage in depicting different types of tabular information. Simple to make and easy to understand, bar charts are particularly suitable for the reporting of comparative figures (see Exhibit H). The idea of the bar chart lends itself to many interesting variations and adaptations; thus a pictorial chart may, in addition to its usual function of depicting data, partake somewhat of the nature of a cartoon, as indicated by Exhibit I.³⁶ The circle or pie chart shows the relationships borne by the component parts to the whole, and is commonly used to illustrate the disposition of the tax dollar. The usual arithmetic graphs are suitable for picturing amounts of variation of figures which involve a time sequence. Logarithmic graphs should be used, however, for presenting like data in which the *rates* rather than the *amounts* of variations are of first importance.

The use of illustrations in the annual report greatly enhances its value. Photographs not only supplement the ideas set forth in the text but also invoke concepts which can not be conveyed in writing. Action pictures generally

³⁶*Municipal Activities of the City of Cincinnati, 1935* contains a number of charts which combine the appeal of the cartoon with the message of the chart.



*This chart is taken from Roscoe C. Martin, *A Budget Manual for Texas Cities* (Austin, 1934), p. 123.

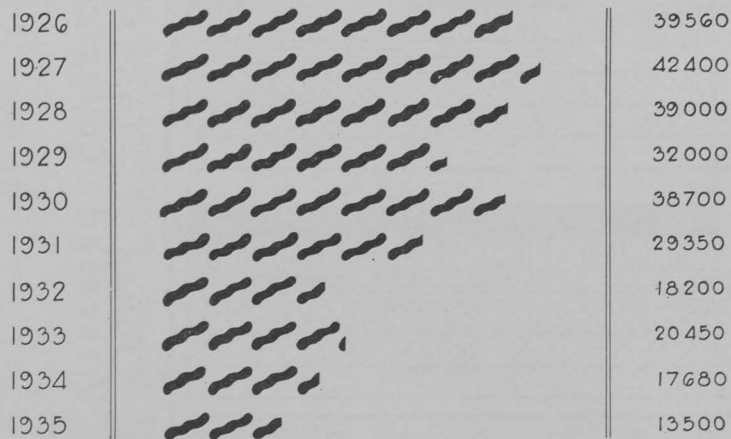
are preferable to still pictures. "Before and after" pictures can be most effective; it is important that each should be made from exactly the same position in order to depict accurately the improvements made (see Exhibit J). Photographs of officials should be used rarely, if at all. Cartoons often may be used with good results (see Exhibit A). The use of maps is particularly desirable in showing the

EXHIBIT I*

PICTORIAL CHART



CINCINNATI STANDARD LESS THAN 50,000 BACTERIA PER C.C.

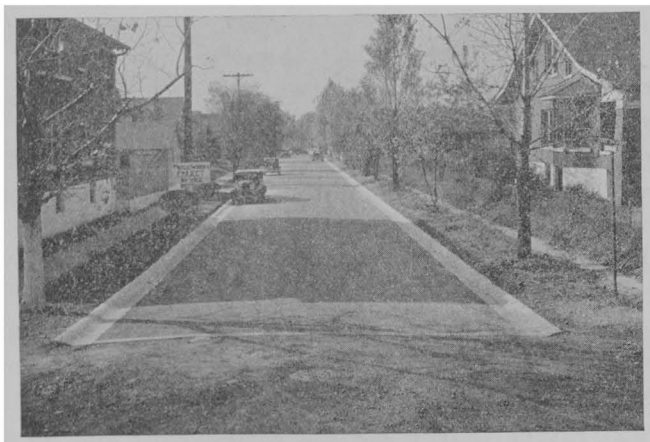
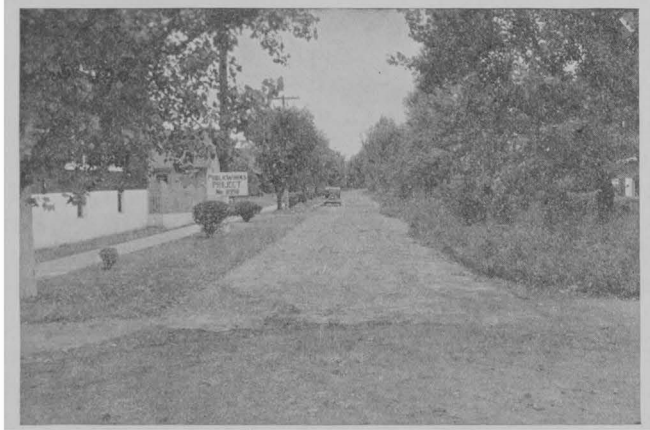


EACH FIGURE REPRESENTS 5000 BACTERIA

*This chart appears in *Municipal Activities of the City of Cincinnati, 1935*, p. 26, and is reproduced here through the courtesy of Mr. C. A. Dykstra, City Manager of Cincinnati, Ohio.

EXHIBIT J*

"BEFORE AND AFTER" PHOTOGRAPHS



*These photographs appear in *Louisville, Municipal Activities, 1935*, p. 42, and are reproduced here through the courtesy of Mr. E. C. Blom, Director of Municipal Research and Service, City of Louisville, Kentucky.

location of public buildings, fire districts, city zones, improvement projects, and the like.³⁷

³⁷Examples may be found in *Municipal Activities of Milwaukee for 1935*, p. 22; and *Municipal Activities of the City of Cincinnati, 1935*, p. 34.

Finally, an attractive binding should be used, and the title should indicate the nature of the contents; thus, "Municipal Activities," "Civic Affairs," and "Municipal Progress" may each give a concept of what is to be found inside. The text should be concisely written and grammatically correct, and it should be in terse, newsy style.³⁸ The technical language of the accountant, engineer, and lawyer should be avoided. Important facts should be stressed by artistic presentation, and the size of print used throughout should be clearly legible and should be designed to direct attention to the various divisions and subdivisions of the report.³⁹ Exhibit K is an example of a method used by the City of Dallas to set off from the regular text some important information which is arranged and boxed in as though it were an advertisement. The size of the report should be such that it will be convenient for both reading and filing, preferably about six by nine inches. It is important also that the report be brief; if it is more than some fifty pages in length, it becomes unwieldy.⁴⁰ The best reports have become shorter and shorter during recent years.⁴¹

A major consideration which governs the good effects that may be expected from the use of the annual consolidated report has to do with the time of publication. Although the content and the mode of presentation may be excellent, there can be no substitute for timeliness. It is highly important that the report be published soon after the end of the year it covers, preferably not more than six weeks after. Further delay makes the report a historical rather than a current instrument, and as such it loses much of its appeal. The cities which published

³⁸*Progress, An Official Report of Municipal Achievement in Dallas* (1935) was prepared by an experienced writer who was hired specifically for the purpose.

³⁹Examples of effective use of different sizes and styles of type may be found in *Civic Affairs, Berkeley, 1934-35*, pp. 7-12.

⁴⁰Clarence E. Ridley, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 29.

EXHIBIT K*

USE OF ADVERTISING METHODS

YOUR TAX BILL IS DUE
ONLY ONCE EACH YEAR

ONCE each year, your City Government calls upon you to make your contribution to the payment of the services it renders to you.

Within the limits of human judgment, your share of the cost is determined accurately, fairly, and directly in proportion to the service that is rendered you and your family.

You may even divide your annual tax payment into two installments, if that is a more convenient method of paying.

But Your City's Service is Continuous

Day and night, month in and month out, the service you buy with your once-a-year tax payment, continues without interruption.

Health protection, that safeguards you every month in the year; a bulky, capable policeman, racing in a radio-equipped car to your home if a prowler threatens in the night; hundreds of trained firemen, with costly, modern equipment, ready instantly to rush to your aid if fire menaces—

These are a few indispensable services that your annual tax payment covers.

PAY *Your* CITY TAXES *Promptly*

CITY TAX DEPARTMENT

Room 107, City Hall

*This exhibit appears in *Progress, An Official Report of Municipal Achievement in Dallas* (1935), p. 10, and is reproduced here through the courtesy of Mr. Hal Moseley, City Manager of Dallas, Texas.

the best annual reports in 1936 had them available about three weeks sooner than in the preceding year.⁴²

⁴²*Ibid.*

The last important consideration in the use of the annual consolidated report concerns its distribution. If a report is to be of any value, it must be placed in the hands of those who will use it; consequently, a well-planned and properly executed system of distribution is essential. The nature of this system depends, of course, upon the size of the city, the size of the report, and the number of copies available for distribution. If the report is small, it may be distributed with the water or tax bills or through the mail, as current pamphlets are distributed.⁴³ This method has the advantages of being inexpensive and of guaranteeing a wide distribution. Louisville, Kentucky, makes use of all available space by printing on the cover of the envelope in which the annual report is mailed a chart showing the disposition of the tax dollar. In a few cities the reports are delivered directly to homes by boy scouts, college students, or policemen.⁴⁴ If a limited supply prevents such a wide distribution, copies may be placed in the hands of those who are particularly interested, to be circulated later among friends and neighbors. In any event, copies should be given to leading citizens, secretaries of various clubs, banks and other semipublic institutions, newspapers, public libraries, schools, and all who call for them at the city hall. One city sends reports to all taxpayers who have a real estate valuation of \$900 or more.⁴⁵ A mailing list should include other cities, bond dealers, leagues of municipalities, city creditors, bureaus of research, and others who request that their names be placed on the list. In every case, distribution should be announced in advance in the newspapers in order that the public will be prepared for the report.

While many of the methods of current reporting are new and cities which use them have very little precedent to guide their efforts, Mr. Clarence E. Ridley has formulated definite standards which should be used both in appraising

⁴³See p. 28.

⁴⁴*Public Management*, Oct., 1934, p. 304.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

reports already issued and in preparing new ones. These criteria, which are used in ranking the reports of the cities of the nation, are as follows:

BASES OF APPRAISAL OF MUNICIPAL REPORTS

I. DATE OF PUBLICATION

1. *Promptness*.—The report will have little value unless published soon after the end of the period covered—six weeks as a maximum.

II. PHYSICAL MAKE-UP

2. *Size*.—Convenient for reading and filing, preferably 6"x9".

3. *Paper and type*.—Paper should be of such a grade and the type of such size and character as to be easily read.

4. *Important facts*.—The more important facts should be emphasized by change of type or by artistic presentation.

5. *Attractiveness*.—The cover, title, introduction, and general appearance should aim to attract the reader and encourage further examination.

III. CONTENT

A. *Illustrative Material*

6. *Diagrams and charts*.—Certain established rules should be followed to insure an accurate and effective presentation.

7. *Maps and pictures*.—A few well-chosen maps to indicate certain improvements, and a liberal supply of pictures, pertinent to the report, should be included.

8. *Distribution*.—Great care should be exercised in placing the illustrative material contiguous to the relevant reading material.

B. *Composition*

9. *Table of contents*.—A short table of contents in the front of the report is a great aid for ready reference.

10. *Organization chart*.—An organization chart or table indicating the services rendered by each unit, if placed in the front of the report, will help the reader to a clearer understanding of what follows.

11. *Letter of transmittal*.—A short letter of transmittal which either contains or is followed by a summary of outstanding accomplishments and recommendations for the future should open the report.

12. *Recommendations and accomplishments*.—A comparison of past recommendations with the progress toward their execution will serve as an index to the year's achievements.

13. *Length*.—Fifty pages should be the maximum length.

14. *Literary style*.—The text should be clear and concise, reflecting proper attention to grammar, sentence structure, and diction.

15. *Arrangement*.—The report of the various governmental units should correlate with the organization structure, or follow some other logical arrangement.

16. *Balanced content*.—The material should show a complete picture, and each activity should occupy space in proportion to its relative importance.

17. *Statistics*.—Certain statistics must be included, but wherever appropriate, they should be supplemented by simple diagrams or charts.

18. *Comparative data*.—The present year's accomplishments should be compared with those of previous years, but only with full consideration of all factors involved.

19. *Financial statements*.—Three or four financial statements should be included, showing amount expended and the means of financing each function and organization unit.

20. *Propaganda*.—It is unethical and in poor taste to include material for departmental or personal aggrandizement. Photographs of officials, especially of administrators, seem out of place in a public report.⁴⁶

The preparation of the annual report under no condition should become a stereotyped, repetitive process. Inspection of the criteria listed above reveals that ample leeway is allowed for the use of originality and ingenuity.

If the annual report contains well-selected information, is properly arranged, is printed soon after the end of the year, and is distributed strategically, it serves a purpose which can be fulfilled by no other type of public reporting. Above all other considerations, this report should be accurate and unbiased, an authentic account of municipal affairs. That the value of the annual report is recognized by many cities of the country is indicated by the fact that slightly more than half the cities which participated in a recent national survey use annual consolidated reports.⁴⁷ In Texas, however, Austin is the only city which regularly publishes such a report. The Austin reports have appeared for ten consecutive years and have won high national

⁴⁶Clarence E. Ridley, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁴⁷*Public Management*, Oct., 1934, p. 303.

recognition. A thirty-page report covering a three-year period was published by Dallas in 1935. Fort Worth in 1930 and Houston in 1928 published general reports. Texas cities remain to be awakened to the desirability of publishing annual consolidated reports.

The formal report, whether departmental, functional, or consolidated, serves as a signpost which marks governmental progress by summarizing systematically the work of the city. At the same time, it directs attention to plans and programs for the future. Serving as it does as both a history and a forecast, it plays a very important rôle in educating the electorate in the public's business. City officials would do well to recognize this elementary fact, and to give much more thought in the future than they have in the past to the principles of formal reporting, the more fundamental of which are outlined in the chapter here concluded.

CHAPTER V

A PUBLIC REPORTING PROGRAM

Both the apparent indifference of taxpayers to pyramiding indebtedness during the prosperous era of the 1920's and the tax strikes during the depression years of the early 1930's suggest the absence of a body of fundamental facts upon which citizens may build an intelligent understanding of the processes of government. An electorate which must rely upon hearsay rather than proven truth is prone to be apathetic in prosperous years and blindly unreasoning during depressions. It follows that cities need to employ carefully planned systems of public reporting, for popular enlightenment is necessary for the continuance of sound urban democracy. Most Texas cities at present do very little toward making their people partners in the business of government, for no city in the state at present pursues an adequate program of current and formal reporting, although some few have made great strides in this field during recent years.

Never before have conditions been so favorable to the launching of a system of municipal reporting, for the depression has forced city dwellers to realize that their governments are important institutions from the viewpoints of both services rendered and money spent. Cities should find it easier now than ever before to arouse the interest of citizens in municipal government.

A number of municipal activities are highly technical, and many procedures which are necessary in metropolitan cities are far too complex for smaller towns. Public reporting, however, is relatively nontechnical, the difference between its use in large and in small cities being chiefly one of degree. It is true that populous cities may use the radio and may print reports which are more pretentious than those of the smaller cities, but the fundamental principles of judging news values, of cooperating with various organizations, and of furnishing information which is accurate and attractive apply universally.

If a city now limits its public reporting to the perfunctory publication of ordinances and financial statements in newspapers, the use of any one or more of the procedures described in the preceding chapters is highly desirable. More important than the use of any one or two, however, is the development of a well-rounded program which includes all, for each directs attention to the others, appeals to the public in a special way, and reaches citizens who are not impressed by the others. In other words, the various methods of public reporting supplement each other in such a way as to increase materially the effectiveness of the reporting system, and hence should be used jointly.

What are the requirements for working out and using a program of public reporting? The first is that both the officials and the subordinate employees of the city be sympathetic with the idea of publicizing municipal affairs. Officials must realize that they hold positions of public trust, that they are responsible to the electorate, and that they carry the obligation to inform the taxpayers not only of services rendered but also of money spent. The importance of public reporting in the beginning must be "sold" to the entire city organization.

The second requirement is that the administration give public reporting an important place as a bona fide municipal function. One person should have full authority and complete responsibility for performing this function. In large cities the secretary to the mayor or the assistant to the manager may have charge of public reporting. In the smaller cities the duty probably should be assumed by either the mayor, the secretary, or the manager. In any event the members of the city council, as representatives of the electorate, should hold the responsible person to his duty, and the person chosen should make a thorough study of public reporting methods, particularly as practiced by other cities.

The third requirement is that the city have adequate records and a complete system of internal reports. Most important are the accounting records, but those of the

health, fire, water, police, and other departments are also necessary. That each set of records should be kept accurately goes without saying; moreover, each should furnish the information required for both internal and external reporting. Only facts of unquestioned authenticity should be given to the citizens, council members, and executives. The timeliness of information also depends upon the manner in which records are kept. They should furnish the information promptly when it is needed. Further, records should be kept consistently from year to year in order that reports may yield comparative data for a period of years. Finally, the installation of uniform records and fiscal periods would greatly facilitate the collecting of comparative data for a number of cities. The historical purpose of records is secondary to the furnishing of accurate and prompt information.

When the requisites above named are present, the city is ready to begin the installation and use of a program of public reporting. Methods for furnishing information to the public or for arousing public interest should be studied carefully in order to discover ways of increasing the effectiveness of each, for public reporting is a live and growing subject which requires all the ingenuity city officials can command. The following outline brings together in a few pages a summary of the devices which have been discussed in the preceding chapters.

OUTLINE OF A MUNICIPAL REPORTING PROGRAM

I. CURRENT REPORTING

A. The Press

1. Methods of releasing news
 - a. Regular, usually daily, interviews with reporters
 - b. Written releases of important events
2. Kinds of newspaper articles
 - a. Regular news stories
 - b. Periodic releases
 - c. Feature articles
3. Aids to effectiveness
 - a. Special printing methods—boxed articles, heavy type, etc.

- b. Photographs, charts, and cartoons
 - c. Municipal news in the same part of the paper from day to day
 - d. Continued publicity of items of special importance
 - 4. Municipally published journals
 - a. Ordinances, financial statements, notices, etc.
 - b. News articles of general interest
- B. Pamphlets
 - 1. Subject matter and regularity
 - a. Periodic pamphlets concerning general municipal services
 - b. Special pamphlets when occasion demands
 - 2. Aids to effectiveness
 - a. Various colors of paper
 - b. Different sizes of type
 - c. Photographs, charts, and cartoons
 - 3. Methods of distribution
 - a. With water and tax bills
 - b. By mail
 - c. By direct delivery
- C. Signs
 - 1. On public buildings
 - a. Identification of buildings
 - b. Identification of offices in buildings
 - 2. On public construction projects
 - 3. During campaigns for fire protection, tax collection, etc.
 - 4. Allied devices
 - a. Bulletin boards
 - b. Posters, windshield stickers, etc.
- D. Motion Pictures
 - 1. Slides in both large and small cities
 - 2. Films in large cities (from national associations, such as the National Board of Fire Underwriters and the National Safety Council)
- E. Exhibits and Demonstrations
 - 1. Kinds of exhibits
 - a. Charts, pictures, and models in city offices
 - b. Formal annual open house
 - c. Booths at county and regional fairs
 - 2. Demonstrations by expert members of fire, police, and other departments
- F. Public Schools
 - 1. Talks to students
 - a. Simple, nontechnical talks at general assemblies
 - b. Technical talks to classes in civics, science, etc.

2. Participation of students
 - a. Essay, debate, and poster contests
 - b. Students' clubs
 - c. Annual "Boys' Day" and "Girls' Day"
 3. Delivery of pamphlets and reports to schools
 - G. Civic and Business Clubs
 1. Talks before clubs
 - a. Advance distribution of subjects
 - b. Regard for personal interests of listeners
 2. Teamwork among civic organizations
 3. Assistance of clubs in municipal enterprises
 - H. Budget Hearings
 1. Aids to increased attendance
 - a. Advance newspaper releases
 - b. Oral and written invitations
 2. Presentation of interesting program
 - a. Display of charts and diagrams
 - b. Encouragement of reporting *by the public*
 - c. Emphasis on the fact that the budget governs number and salaries of city employees, quality and volume of municipal services, and amounts of tax payments
 - I. Citizen Advisory Committees
 1. Study of difficult or unusual problems
 2. Features of committee procedure
 - a. Regular meetings
 - b. Adherence to definite problems
 3. Direction by city officials
 - J. Personal Contact
 1. Callers at city offices
 - a. Courteous treatment of all visitors
 - b. Interviews in order of appointment or arrival
 2. Correspondence: prompt, simple, direct, and friendly
 3. Complaints
 - a. Prompt adjustment
 - b. Report to complainant of action taken
 4. Tactful treatment of public by subordinate employees
 - K. Radio: careful preparation of programs
- ## II. FORMAL REPORTING
- A. Departmental and Functional Reports
 1. Problems involved
 - a. Frequency of publication
 - b. Number of copies of each issue
 - c. Publication by printing or mimeographing

2. Contents: information pertaining to services, costs, problems, organization, functions, powers, standards of efficiency, work methods, accomplishments, and plans
 3. Aids to effectiveness
 - a. Attractive covers
 - b. Different sizes of type
 - c. Various colors of paper
 - d. Photographs, charts, and cartoons
 - e. Simple and effective language
 4. Distribution
 - a. To persons and groups within the city
 - b. To selected agencies outside the city
- B. The Annual Consolidated Report
1. Purpose
 - a. Summarization of all municipal activities into coherent story
 - b. Presentation of information desired by citizens
 2. Contents
 - a. Introductory statement
 - b. Table of contents
 - c. Letter of transmittal
 - d. Organization chart
 - e. Summary of year's activities
 - f. Departmental reports
 - g. Reports of city-owned utilities
 - h. Financial statement
 - i. List of plans and recommendations
 - j. Information directory
 3. Presentation of content
 - a. Amount of space in accordance with importance of activity
 - b. Understandable numerical data
 - c. Charts and graphs
 - d. Photographs and other illustrations
 - e. Limitation of length
 - f. Careful preparation of written material
 - g. Effective use of different sizes of type
 - h. Attractive binding
 4. Prompt publication
 5. Plan of distribution
 - a. Announcement in advance in newspapers
 - b. Delivery to every interested person, group, or agency inside and outside the city

The steps suggested by the outline should be incorporated into a program which gives each activity of the city government its just, proportionate share of attention, thus picturing the municipal organization as a unified whole. Some department heads are of a retiring nature while others are aggressive and outspoken. The chief executive should take care that the departments receive publicity in proportion to their need rather than in proportion to the insistence of the department heads, for a balanced presentation of the facts is necessary if the citizen is to gain a true picture of his city government. Moreover, in preparing for public use the information from the various departments, technical terminology should give way to simple and unadorned verbiage.

No incorporated city is so poor or so small that its officials can not work out and employ an effective program of public reporting the cost of which is commensurate with the size and economic condition of the city; for public reporting principles are universally applicable and relatively inexpensive, their greatest cost being that of considerable thought and some energy on the part of city officials. For example, the making of systematic releases to the newspapers, the distribution of brief pamphlets, the delivery of talks at public schools, coöperation with civic clubs, and the use of citizen committees involve little expense. Radio stations and motion picture theaters often are willing to contribute their services free of charge. Exhibits and demonstrations, if planned carefully, may be held at a nominal cost. Formal departmental and annual reports may be mimeographed if there are insufficient funds for their printing. In Austin the annual report is published at an expense less than that of holding a city election. Is it not worth as much to prepare the citizen for his duty of voting as to furnish the machinery by which he votes?

After a program of public reporting is in use, the next and final requirement is that of judging its effectiveness in terms of its reception by the public. The first step consists in keeping a complete file of all pamphlets, folders, and

reports issued by the city and of all news stories which relate to the city government. Also in this file should be copies of speeches delivered by members of the city organization, with the name of the person giving the speech and the date and place. The file also should contain posters, motion picture films and slides, descriptions of all exhibits and demonstrations, and photographs of important municipal signs. Similarly, written accounts should be preserved of the methods used in coöperating with schools, of the activities at budget hearings, and of the work of citizen committees.

The second step in judging the effectiveness of public reporting involves an actual investigation of the reactions of citizens. Various members of the municipal organization, through their friends and acquaintances, hear statements about the public reporting practices of the city; these statements should be relayed to the official who has charge of public reporting. Further, the official who has charge of reporting may invite responses from those who receive the reports of his city. An example is afforded by the following words which appear on a sheet slipped between the cover and the title page of one report:

Please accept the enclosed report with the compliments of the City of New Rochelle, N. Y.

Will you be good enough to let me know if you find this report useful and if you would like us to continue to send it to you every year?

EDWARD J. GLICK

City Auditor.¹

A further refinement in the seeking of information from users of reports is the use of a return post card (see Exhibit L) on which the receiver can, by making a check mark, indicate his opinion. This return post card may be mailed out as a part of a folded post card (the first part bearing the address of the receiver), or it may be placed in the report next to a page which furnishes instructions and

¹*Annual Report of the City Auditor of the City of New Rochelle, New York, 1935.*

EXHIBIT L*

QUESTIONNAIRE POST CARD

THE CITY OF _____

Please indicate by a check mark (✓) your treatment of this report:

1. I read it thoroughly _____
2. I glance through it _____
3. I do not read it _____

List your suggestions for its improvement: _____

*This questionnaire post card was adapted from one prepared by Herman C. Beyle. See *Public Management*, June, 1936, p. 165.

invites a response.² The answers should be tabulated and used as a guide.

Public reporting is no fetish to be worshiped, nor is it an end in itself. Rather, is it a means to an end, a tool to use. It rests upon the belief that the public does not have a fair chance to learn the facts about government, rather than that the public does not care to learn the facts. It should be employed to the end of perpetuating democratic government by further qualifying the electorate to perform its

²An excellent article on the subject of measuring the reaction of the public municipal reports has been written by Herman C. Beyle, "Checking Response to Municipal Publicity," *Public Management*, June, 1936, pp. 163-166.

manifold duties, which grow more complex and more difficult with the passing of the years.

Some city officials apparently feel that so long as they do their work they need tell nobody about it, and that any citizen who makes inquiry is an intruder. These officials, who fortunately are in the minority, hold to an archaic idea which may be applicable in some kinds of enterprises but which certainly has no place in democratic government. The present discussion not only sets forth the reasons why citizens have the right to know about the services, receipts, costs, problems, and plans of city government, but also explains the methods by which the essential information may be given to the public. To the extent that the methods outlined are put into use by the cities of Texas, the interests of both municipal governments and urban citizens will be served.

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